

Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro
LD 958

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary,

My name is Shemaya Laurel and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 958, "An Act to Amend the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act Regarding Eminent Domain."

I would first like to offer my great thanks to House Minority Leader Faulkingham and to Senator Marianne Moore, my State Representative and State Senator, respectively, for bringing this bill forward.

This bill is enormously important for all the reasons that have already been stated so clearly in previous testimonies. I am in complete agreement that this bill is important, for all of these reasons:

- LD 958 restores fairness and respects Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands. It is inappropriate for any state, including Maine, to claim lands that are part of those sovereign nations.
- Federal law protects most tribal nations from state-level eminent domain, but because of the 1980 Settlement Acts, the Wabanaki Nations are not protected by this Federal law. They should be.
- You have heard about the history of the taking of Wabanaki land, without discussion with the affected Nations, for road building, and the damage caused. This bill is not created for hypothetical reasons. It is needed to prevent future harm.
- This bill encourages collaboration, not conflict. We all care about finding solutions to address larger community needs that involve both the State of Maine and the Wabanaki Nations. LD 958 creates a structure to foster exactly that collaboration.
- This bill reflects progress toward fairness in the relations between the State of Maine and Wabanaki Nations. Please embrace it, to bring the State of Maine into alignment with Federal law across the country, and to do the right thing by our neighbors.

For all of these reasons, please vote "ought to pass" on LD 958, "An Act to Amend the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act Regarding Eminent Domain."

Sincerely,
Shemaya Laurel
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