

April 4, 2025

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing this testimony in favor of LD 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands.

There are many reasons to pass this bill. The first is basic fairness. This bill would offer all Wabanaki nations the basic respect of having a voice in anything the state wishes to do on their land. This is the case for nearly all other Federally-recognized tribes within the United States. If we settler Mainers truly see the tribes as independent nations with the right to self-govern, it is only logical that we ask for, rather than take forcibly, any of their land that we as a state should need. Legally and morally, LD 958 is the right thing to do.

Such basic respect has not always been the case for Wabanaki Nations. There is a long history of Wabanaki lands being taken, but we do not need to look into the distant past: in 1925, eminent domain was used to take land from the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik for Route 190. This development had negative impacts on the community there, splitting it apart. As a settler Mainer, I will feel more proud of my state for having restored a consensual relationship with Wabanaki nations.

In addition, all of us, Wabanaki or settler, will benefit from tribes having voice over what happens to their land. Though we have separate jurisdictions, what happens in one affects the other. The waters and ecosystems we live in connect us. If LD 958 is passed, Wabanaki nations will use the tools therein in the interest of preserving many things Mainers hold dear. The Wabanaki, like many Mainers, want their children's children's children to be able hunt, fish and farm on land and water that supports a diversity of species, and is not polluted by toxic chemicals. Because the tribes have sustenance hunting and fishing rights enshrined, they have tools that other Mainers don't to protect these rights for all of us. The Wabanaki, like many Mainers, want their grandchildren and great-great-great-grandchildren to have good jobs that support families. They are going to find a way to support wise development that can benefit neighboring Maine communities in addition to their own. With LD 958, they will be given the ability to make these decisions at the local lever, thereby increasing Wabanaki nations' ability to have local control, which will ultimately increase Mainers' local control. Our interests are more aligned than not. I urge you to support LD 958.

Sincerely,
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