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Kennebunk
LD 958

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I urge you to support LD 958 to restore fairness and respect the Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands. No one should have their land taken without consultation or agreement, and this protection is already afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes.

Federal law protects most tribal nations from state-level eminent domain, but the 1980 Settlement Acts have resulted in the Wabanaki Nations in Maine being unfairly excluded from these federal protections.

History shows the harm of eminent domain on Wabanaki lands. Maine Route 190, which cuts through the heart of the Passamaquoddy Reservation at Sipayik, was taken by eminent domain in 1925—a decision made without tribal input. LD 958 would ensure that no such action happens again without tribal consultation - encouraging collaboration, not conflict.

If a project truly benefits the public, the state, and the tribes, the state should work with tribal leaders to find a solution. This legislation is a protective measure to guarantee consultation and mutual agreement before any action is taken on tribal lands by ensuring the tribes have a voice.

While we cannot undo the harm that has already been done, we can do better moving forward. The Wabanaki Nations should not be treated differently from other federally recognized tribes. This bill ensures fairness, respects sovereignty, and prevents future injustices.