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**Testimony in Support of L.D. 1620, *An Act to Amend
the Laws Regarding the Mi'kmaq Nation***

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am Aaron Frey, and I have the privilege of serving as Maine's Attorney General. I am here to testify in support of L.D. 1620, an *Act to Amend the Laws Regarding the Mi'kmaq Nation*.

Over the last several months, my office has been engaged in numerous lengthy discussions with the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Governor's Office on legislation that would redefine the jurisdictional relationship between the State and the Nation similar to the relationship between the State and the Penobscot Nation and the Passamaquoddy Tribe. Those discussions were significantly productive, and I want to thank all those who participated. I want to give special thanks to the Mi'kmaq Nation's chief and its legal counsel for their tremendous efforts, as well as for their collegiality. In the coming years, we look forward to building on this positive and fruitful working relationship.

The bill you have before you is the result of these discussions. If enacted, it would allow the Nation to exercise various powers and receive certain benefits within Mi'kmaq Nation Jurisdiction Land. This consists of all land currently held in trust for the Nation by the Secretary of the Interior plus any subsequently acquired land in Aroostook County within 50 miles of existing trust land. On Mi'kmaq Nation Jurisdiction Land, the Nation would be treated similarly to the Penobscot Nation and the Passamaquoddy Tribe with respect to various matters, including exclusive jurisdiction over internal tribal matters, the same power to enact ordinances as municipalities, the regulation of hunting, trapping and fishing, the right of the Nation's members to take fish for their individual sustenance, tribal court jurisdiction over various civil and criminal matters, and law enforcement authority. The Nation would also be authorized to regulate drinking water, similar to the amendments to the Maine Implementing Act in the 130th Legislature regarding the authority of the Passamaquoddy Tribe to regulate drinking water.

Because our discussions continued after the language for this bill was submitted to the Revisor's Office, some minor amendments to this bill may be proposed. By and large, though, the bill before you reflects the consensus of the Nation, the Governor's Office, and my office.

It is fair and just to allow the Mi'kmaq Nation to exercise the same attributes of sovereignty that other Tribes in Maine have exercised for decades. Accordingly, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on L.D. 1620.