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Testimony of Rep. Jennifer Poirier on
LD 958, "An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

April 4, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jennifer Poirier and I represent House District 70, which is the great community of Skowhegan.

I am here today to testify in strong support for **LD 958, "An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands"**. This critical piece of legislation ensures that land located within Passamaquoddy Indian territory, Penobscot Indian territory, the Houlton Band Trust Land, and the Mi'kmaq Nation Trust Land is protected from being taken for public use under the laws of this State.

For too long, the inherent sovereignty of Maine's Wabanaki Nations has been undermined by outdated policies that fail to recognize their right to self-governance and territorial integrity. This bill is a necessary step toward upholding the original intent of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act, which sought to restore a measure of justice to these nations. LD 958 strengthens these commitments by ensuring that tribal lands remain under the control of the tribes and are not subject to state eminent domain laws that could threaten their ownership and use.

The passage of this bill is crucial for multiple reasons:

1. **Preserving Tribal Sovereignty** – The right to control and protect their land is fundamental to the self-determination of the Wabanaki Nations. LD 958 reaffirms that these lands should not be subject to involuntary public takings by the State.
2. **Honoring Legal and Moral Commitments** – The original settlement agreements were designed to restore land and rights to the tribes. Any attempt to take land for public use contradicts both the letter and the spirit of those agreements.

3. **Strengthening Tribal-State Relations** – Maine has the opportunity to move toward a more equitable relationship with its tribal nations by acknowledging their right to govern their own lands without external interference.
4. **Protecting Cultural and Environmental Heritage** – Tribal lands are deeply connected to the history, culture, and well-being of the Wabanaki Nations. Protecting them from public taking ensures that future generations can continue to thrive on their ancestral lands.

LD 958 is not only a legal necessity but also a moral imperative. The Wabanaki Nations have long demonstrated their commitment to responsible land stewardship and community development. This legislation allows them to continue that tradition without the fear of losing their land through state mechanisms.

I urge this committee to support LD 958. This bill represents an opportunity to rectify historical injustices and foster a future based on mutual respect and cooperation between the State of Maine and its tribal nations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Poirier
State Representative