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Committee on Judiciary

Testimony in Support of:
L.D. 958, *An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands*
By Gia Drew on behalf of EqualityMaine

April 4, 2025

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

My name is Gia Drew and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of L.D. 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands.

The Wabanaki have called this land home for millenia. However, for more than 40 years, the State of Maine has used the 1980 Settlement Acts to deny the Wabanaki Nations the same rights, powers, and privileges as the other 570 federally-recognized tribes in the United States. According to the 2019 Research Findings of the Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples Clinic at Suffolk University Law School, there have been more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980 from which the Wabanaki Nations and the State of Maine were generally not able to benefit due to the restrictions of the Settlement Acts.[1] For example, federal law protects most tribal nations from state-level eminent domain, but the Settlement Acts have resulted in the Wabanaki Nations being unjustly excluded from these federal protections. We believe that no one should have their land simply taken without discussion and mutual agreement.

The theft of Wabanaki land and the failure to recognize their sovereign rights to manage and steward the waters, forests, and wildlife in their communities is an affront to the inherent rights of the Wabanaki to self-govern and to regulate their territories. We urge you to vote "Ought To Pass" on L.D. 958 in order to restore fairness and prevent future injustices.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)
Executive Director, EqualityMaine

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[1] Friederichs, N. "Federal laws enacted after October 10, 1980 for the benefit of Indians or Indian Nations." *Suffolk University Law School*, 2019, legislature.maine.gov/doc/3616.