

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Jeff Romano, testifying in support of LD 1054 as amended on behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Kaitlyn Nuzzo of The Nature Conservancy, and more than twenty other land conservation organizations who work in communities across the state.

In recent years, Maine's land conservation community has been working with the Wabanaki on projects to return land, access, and stewardship responsibility to traditional places and resources. Through this collaboration, we have identified a need to clarify Maine's existing conservation easement law to make it clearer that federally recognized tribal governments have access to the same legal tools as land trusts and municipalities to care for lands including culturally important sites. These changes, although minor, will provide additional tools to facilitate important land return and access efforts across the state.

Specifically, this proposed amendment to the Maine Conservation Easement Act would:

- Expand the definition of "conservation easement" to include easements that preserve the historical, architectural, archaeological or cultural aspects of a property. In a way, the statute already speaks to these values by including them in the definition of a qualified holder in 476(2)(B). The amendment simply copies the phrase at the end of 476(2)(B) and pastes it into 476(1), ensuring the two subsections include the same category of values. Similar language has been used in other states to support tribal access and land holdings.
- Expand the definition of "holder" to include federally recognized Indian tribes. Although it is likely that the statute, by referring to any "government body empowered to hold an interest in real property," already includes federally recognized tribes, this amendment would explicitly include such tribes within the definition.

We encourage the committee to support these small, but important additions to Maine's Conservation Easement Law.

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*The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together.*

*Maine Coast Heritage Trust seeks to advance the conservation of lands and waters in Maine to ensure ecological wellbeing and foster thriving communities. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 185,000 acres, including over 160 places open for traditional outdoor recreation.*

*Androscoggin Land Trust*  
*Appalachian Mountain Club*  
*Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust*  
*Harpswell Heritage Land Trust*  
*Inland Woods + Trails*  
*Kennebunkport Conservation Trust*  
*Kittery Land Trust*  
*Loon Echo Land Trust*  
*Mahoosuc Land Trust*  
*Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust*  
*Maine Farmland Trust*  
*Midcoast Conservancy*

*Momentum Conservation*  
*Moosehead Regional Land Trust*  
*Portland Trails*  
*Presumpscot Regional Land Trust*  
*Rangely Lakes Heritage Trust*  
*Royal River Conservation Trust*  
*Sanford-Springvale Mousam Way Land Trust*  
*Sebasticook Regional Land Trust*  
*The Conservation Fund*  
*Three Rivers Land Trust*  
*Trust for Public Land*  
*York Land Trust*