

Christy Fitzpatrick
Houlton
LD 958

To: Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and the members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: Christy Fitzpatrick
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Introduction: Senator Carney, Representative Harnett and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Christy Fitzpatrick and I live in Houlton, in Aroostook County, Maine. I am writing to testify in support of LD1626 and to encourage you to support this legislation.

Testimony: I, Christy Fitzpatrick, write to support LD 958. This bill which amends the Act to Implement the Maine Indian Claims Settlement and the Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act to prevent the taking of land for public uses under the laws of this State if the land is located within Passamaquoddy Indian territory, Penobscot Indian territory, the Houlton Band Trust Land or the Mi'kmaq Nation Trust Land is needed to make it legally clear that Indian land is not to be taken by the State of Maine by Eminent Domain. This should have been included in the original land claims settlement and this is an important step toward correcting the many omissions in that Act.

Passage of this bill will provide protection to Maine tribal lands that is already afforded to most federally recognized tribes. The Maine Indian Land Claims Act contains many provisions that have prevented Maine tribes from protections and resources provided to other federally recognize tribes. This bill remedies one part of this gross unfair treatment of our tribes. It also puts Maine in alignment with federal policy in Indian lands.

Very importantly this bill acknowledges the sovereignty of the Wabanaki nations and their right to control their own lands.

Another important reason that this bill should be moved forward is that it has been crafted and brought forward with bipartisan support and support from the Maine tribes. Members on both sides of the aisle recognize this inequity within the Maine Indian Lands Claim Act and appear committed to remedying it. It is a great opportunity to do the right thing!

In this time of uncertainty, it is vitally important that our Maine tribes have specific legal control of their own sovereign lands. The bill gives the Wabanaki tribes a voice and a sovereign right to decide what happens on their lands. At the same time, the collaborative work done on the bill models how the tribes and the state can work together as equals when land use issues arise.

Closing: Thank you for considering my testimony. The Wabanaki Nations should not be treated differently from other federally recognized tribes. Passing LD 958 restores a fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are to be respected as sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their land, ensures that the tribes and their lands are treated with fairness, and prevents future injustices.