

Nancy Kurtz
Topsham
LD 958

Testimony on LD 958
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I support LD 958 which has bipartisan support and would amend the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act and the 2023 Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act to prevent the state from taking Wabanaki land for public uses under eminent domain, often referred to as "the right of eminent domain." LD 958 restores a fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their territories.

This bill restores fairness, respects Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands, and provides a protection that is already afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes.

Taking tribal land without consultation is against federal policy but the 1980 Settlement Acts have resulted in the Wabanaki Nations in Maine being unfairly excluded from these federal protections.

Recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty to regulate their own territories is an important step in restoring sovereign rights that were unfairly taken throughout our colonial history.

This bill encourages collaboration, not conflict. If a project could truly benefit the public, the state, and the tribes, the state should work with tribal leaders to find a solution. This legislation is a protective measure to guarantee consultation and mutual agreement before any action is taken on tribal lands. It ensures the tribes have a voice.

This bill is a step towards justice and fairness. The Wabanaki Nations should not be treated differently from other federally recognized tribes. This bill ensures fairness, respects sovereignty, and prevents future injustices. LD 958 restores a fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their territories.