

To: The Honorable Senator Luchini, Chair
The Honorable Representative Caiazzo, Chair
Members, Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

From: Matthew Fortin
Maine Law Student, Member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe

Date: March 15, 2021

Re: **In Support**
LD 554, An Act to Create Gaming Equity and Fairness for the Native
American Tribes in Maine

**Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and distinguished members of the
Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,**

My name is Matthew Fortin, a resident of Yarmouth, Maine. For thirteen years after college, I was a teacher in Westbrook. I decided to change careers and am now in my second year of law school at the University of Maine School of Law. I am also a proud member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. Thank you for reading my testimony **in support of LD 554.**

I've been around long enough to witness several referendum questions on Native casinos taking place, all to be struck down while other casinos got approval and have since flourished. The hope of economic independence and opportunity has repeatedly been met with disappointment; meanwhile, out-of-state companies hold a monopoly on the gaming industry.

Maine Tribes should have equal access to economic development. Revenue generated from gaming centers would drastically change the outlook for Maine Tribes, allowing them to further support their schools and health care systems, while also providing opportunity for other business ventures.

Members of the Committee, the time is right for change. This bill allows federal law, concerning gaming only, to supersede Maine law within Tribal territories and trust land. It is time to allow for economic stimulation by groups of willing and able tribal

citizens, rather than continue to stifle them. This is not about gambling; it is about fairness, equity, and repairing tribal and State relations.

LD 554 takes a step toward healing. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of it. I strongly urge the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs to vote **Ought to Pass**.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Fortin