

Testimony by Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador, Maulian Dana

In Opposition to LD 1060: An Act To Increase the State Revenue from Casino Net Income, Reallocate the State Distribution and Provide Tax Uniformity

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

I am testifying today in opposition to the proposed legislation on behalf of the Penobscot Nation. While this bill may be well intentioned, it undermines tribal sovereignty and self-determination. There has been a lot of meaningful work done to try to heal the fractured relationship between the tribes and the state. This work can only succeed if it comes from a place of truth and respect. Part of the respect piece is the shift from treating the tribes like wards of the state in a paternalistic way to a place of government to government relations. The tribes did not sign away our rights or sovereignty in 1980.

LD 1060 was written with no consultation with the five federally recognized tribal communities in Maine. It seeks to undo agreements already in place regarding casino revenue and propose new ones without ever having a conversation with the tribes. This would affect our community significantly and we have not had the chance to weigh in on it until today.

The work we have done in collaboration with lawmakers is all rooted in restoration of rights, recognition of inherent sovereignty, equity, fairness, and healing. LD 1060 treats the tribes as bodies with no agency or voice. We have worked very hard to prove that we have both, and we are keenly aware that these are things our ancestors were denied through systemic oppression and trauma. We stand on their shoulders so we need to speak loud when our rights are not being honored.

The appropriate way to acknowledge tribal sovereignty when it comes to gaming is to support Rep. Collings bill LD 554. This bill has been crafted in close collaboration with the tribes and we testified strongly in support.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1060 because it would undermine the tribal self-determination that we are all working tirelessly to restore in Maine. We are capable of being our own decision makers and we are strongly opposed to any measures that seek to speak for us without our consent.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maulian Dana