



March 31, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD 794:

*An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women*

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee of State and Local Government,

As Executive Director of the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance (MMSA) and a current commission on the Governor's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, I submit this testimony in strong support of LD 794. This is my second term on the commission and it has been a joy to see the commission grow in strength and capacity over that tenure. Our chair, Kate Elmes, has been able to leverage her energy and relationships to fill all of the seats that had been vacant for a while. Additionally, we have a diverse representation across many cross sections of the people of Maine - providing a true representation of ideas and perspectives that matches the diversity of our state. Even with these advances, it has been excessively difficult working toward accomplishing the goals set for the commission without the staff or monetary support that the commission was meant to have access to from its inception. Imagine the potential dividends the investment this bill could initiate.

We would have the capacity to put energy and resources into data-driven reporting to provide a nuanced understanding of women in the workforce, the challenges rural women face accessing critical resources and services, and many other timely issues. For example, at MMSA my team has been conducting research on the challenges rural women face on the road to the STEM workforce. We are just beginning to understand the barriers to success throughout the K-16 education landscape and opportunities for improving outcomes for young women in STEM. The additional support this bill would provide would give the commission the ability to partner with organizations, like MMSA, committed to improving the lives of women throughout Maine to benefit the economic, social, and cultural outcomes of the great state of Maine.

Supporting LD 794 will send a clear message - to Maine's women and the women from other states looking for the quality of life Maine can provide - that our state invests in understanding and building solutions to address the challenges women face. Our bipartisan commission would like to accomplish more, but we need your support to do so. Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony in support of LD 794.

Sincerely,

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