

Testimony in Support of

LD 794: An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

Friday, March 31st, 2023

Senator Nagel, Representative Stover and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Jill Barkley Roy and I am a member of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Maine Women. I live in South Portland with my wife, Amy, and our foster daughter.

Early in my career in Maine, I worked in the domestic violence movement alongside advocates, survivors, and various other stakeholders all trying to address this far too common problem. I remember the discussions back in the early 2000s about bringing back the Permanent Commission on the Status of Maine Women. Never could I imagine back then being on this commission now. It is truly an honor to serve alongside my fellow commissioners, representing the interests of Maine women and girls.

I am a proud member of Maine's LGBTQI+ community and strive to amplify the experiences of my community within my service on this commission. Commissioners are appointed based on their knowledge of challenges facing Maine women, which means it is critical that the Commission reflects the diversity of lived experiences of Maine women and girls across the state. The Commission reviewed the current statute language and felt the perspective of LGBTQI+ Mainers is essential to the success of the Commission, and must be required, and intentional, representation. This bill would update the Gubernatorial appointments to reflect this goal of inclusivity.

Though I am still relatively new to the Commission, I see how hard my fellow commissioners work to achieve our goals of providing our bi-annual report and weighing in on policy that could impact Maine women and girls. I have long believed that if you want something done right, you should assign it to a busy woman – and I am in awe of the many roles my fellow commissioners and I hold in our professional and personal lives. However, as unpaid volunteers with competing priorities, we are limited in our ability to truly meet our mission and expand on our reach. A full-time position within State Government is critical to providing the Commission with the expertise and support to produce a high quality biannual report and make consistent policy recommendations each session. This bill would create this position and give us the structure and staffing support to have an even greater impact.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge you to support this bill.

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