

Emily Burnham
Bangor
LD 260

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Emily Burnham, and I am a resident of Bangor. I would like to express my support for LD 260 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law.

I feel incredibly grateful to have been raised in a household that taught me that I could do anything. Professionally, creatively and personally - nothing was off limits. The idea that I would have any opportunity denied to me because of something fundamental to who I am - my gender, my sexuality, my beliefs - would never have crossed my mind. Why would it? On the surface, it sounds ridiculous.

Of course, as we get older and are thrust into the real world, we realize this is very much not the case. It is still a sorrowful fact that equal rights are not guaranteed for all people, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or how they believe or love. I've seen friends passed over for promotions and paid less than their male counterparts because they are female. I've seen recent immigrants denied jobs because they dared to move here seeking a better life. I've seen LGBTQ+ kids told they need to change who they are if they want to join a particular extracurricular activity. It still happens. It's ugly.

It is incredible to me that Maine, known for its independence, resilience and common sense, does not have a law enshrined in its constitution that ensures that everyone is entitled to equal rights. I am a proud, lifetime resident of this state, and as a Mainer, it's extremely important to me that we ALL have equal opportunities in the workplace, the classroom, the doctor's office and in the halls of justice and government. I want kids growing up to feel the same way I did when I was young, and to not have to mature into a world where the same old story of inequality plays out. LD 260 will help make that future a reality for all Mainers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD260.