

Elizabeth-Ellen Clark
Waterville
LD 260

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

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee.

I am Beth Clark, a resident of Waterville, and Chairperson of the American Association of University Women - Maine (AAUW-ME) Program and Public Policy Committee.

I submit this testimony in support of LD 260.

Being a woman has disadvantaged me, from the moment I began my career and continuing into retirement. Both as a practicing nurse and as a professor of nursing at the college level, I earned less income than my male counterparts. Among nurses, male nurses out-earn female nurses across settings, specialties, and positions, with no narrowing of the pay gap over time (Health Affairs Scholar, 2023). Studies report a pay gap of 10-12% for white women. For women of color, the gap is significantly higher. The same is true in higher education, where women in health care education earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by males. The gap exists across all faculty ranks. Unlike faculty who teach only in the classroom, as a nurse, I carried a higher workload. The time I spent in the lab and clinical (hospital or community care settings) was calculated at a lower workload formula. I had to work significantly more hours to "equal" the same workload. The effect of the gap expands over time, with lower cost of living raises disadvantaging women exponentially over a 40 year career. This leaves them at a significant disadvantage in retirement. Additionally, all day care expenses, children's clothing, time and mileage to extracurricular activities, and even the bulk of college tuition came out of my paycheck, leaving me at a disadvantage over my husband in terms of investments and retirement savings. It is time for women to have equal rights to fair pay and compensation. The time is NOW!

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