

Nikki Williams
Portland
LD 260

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

I am writing in support of LD 260. Maine has a very robust state law (the “Maine Human Rights Act” (the MHRA)) aimed at preventing and addressing discrimination in the state - it protects Mainers based on a set of “protected classes”: actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical or mental disability, ancestry or national origin. And while those protections in law are crucially important, discrimination certainly does still occur!

Embedding equal rights as a fundamental requirement in our state constitution would be the next step to addressing systemic discrimination. Mirroring the protections outlined in the MHRA, the Maine Inclusive ERA would guarantee equal rights on the basis of “race, color, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or national origin.”

At a time when the basic rights of Mainers and people across this country are under attack from politicians and the federal government, Maine can do the right thing and enshrine our rights in the state constitution. Systemic challenges need and deserve systemic solutions, embedded in state government.

Thank you,