

Kathleen Caldwell
Brooksville
LD 260

I am testifying in support of this bill as a 74-year-old woman, a mother, a grandmother, and a former legal services lawyer. During my 35 years with legal aid, I represented hundreds of women with low incomes who were discriminated against - sometimes abused - by their landlords, employers and male partners. Although there are laws to help protect them in their daily fight for survival, those laws do not secure them the basic social and legal status that would be guaranteed by an Equal Rights Amendment. I think that middle and upper class women - including myself - can become complacent about this issue, due our relatively comfortable lives. For women with low incomes, I can assure you, that is not the case. They face discrimination on every front - and every day.

Finally, I just want to say that I want my daughter and grand-daughter to live in a country that truly treats women equally. Given the current political climate, this need feels more urgent than ever. I may not see a national ERA in my lifetime, but I will go out much more peacefully knowing that Maine stands with our daughters and granddaughters.