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LD 260

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

My testimony today is in support of LD 260, the Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment.

People may think we've come so far with equality in this country that they wonder why do we even need an equal rights amendment? I think of the Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment like the TV commercial about writing your own will-- If it isn't written down, it doesn't count. Given the state of change of our Federal government, Maine needs to enshrine equal rights for all its citizens in our State Constitution.

Neither of my grandmothers could vote when they were newly married women, which means I am only two generations away from that civil rights milestone. I graduated high school in 1974, so competitive sports through Title IX were not an option for me for my first couple of years of high school (which is a shame because they would've enriched my life). Back then, women could not get credit cards or bank loans without a man cosigning for them. Women could not get into graduate programs in the sciences or engineering simply because they were women. This mattered to me because I wanted to be a research scientist. When I went to medical school in the 1990s, I had a faculty member berate me for taking a spot a man could have had.

We do not want to go back there. If you pay attention to the news, you will have heard men in positions of power or influence in the federal government saying they're not sure women should have the right to vote, or to vote differently from their husbands. Even if the right to vote is never taken away, the threat—and other threats to immigrants, people with disabilities, and people of color-- hang heavy in the air. Federal leadership has fired women and people of color simply because any person of this description must be a "DEI hire" (which of course, is ridiculous).

LD 260 gives all Mainers pathways to fight discrimination and violations of civil rights that other state laws do not. Given the world the way it is right now, we need this protection.

Let's join the 29 other states in this country that have enacted Equal Rights laws and statutes. There is no downside. Equality is not a zero sum game. Guaranteeing rights for one person does not limit the rights of another.

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

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