

Mary Schwanke
Vassalboro, Maine
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I write to provide testimony in support of LD260, the Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment. I am now retired, but spent my 27-year career in higher education, as a member of the faculty at the University of Maine at Farmington. I was hired as an Assistant Professor in 1987, the first female hired in the natural sciences at that institution. Whether I was selected for this position because of Affirmative Action I will never know, but the requirement to hire candidates from underrepresented groups when said candidates have qualifications equal or better than those of traditional candidates (i.e., white males) has been absolutely critical to expanding the diversity of faculty in many institutions, including mine. Bringing broader perspectives to the enterprise of higher education – whether we're talking about research, scholarship, teaching or mentoring – has been a tremendous benefit to future generations. The recent assault on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs is exactly why we need an Equal Rights Amendment to Maine's Constitution. Such an amendment would protect the civil rights of *all* individuals, even if state laws were to change in the future. I urge you to vote in support of LD260.