

Samantha Zawistowski
Bangor
LD 260

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Bangor, ME
March 4, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Samantha Zawistowski, and I am from Bangor, Maine. I am here today in support of LD 260.

While it remains difficult to address discrimination and violations of civil rights in this state, we fall short of our constitutional promise that “All people are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights.” The state is meant to protect those who live within it and make up its people. The Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment bill is crucial to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their identity, are protected from discrimination, promoting equality in a state that has shown increasing diversity and demand for inclusivity. As of 2021, Maine has seen a significant increase in diversity, with the population of people of color rising by over 24% between 2010 and 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Furthermore, a 2020 survey by the Maine Civil Rights Center found that 58% of respondents from marginalized communities reported experiencing discrimination in employment, housing, or public accommodations. In prioritizing the Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment, Maine can affirm its commitment to civil rights, ensuring a safer and more equitable environment for all residents, while also aligning with the values of fairness and justice that the state upholds. Such legislation not only addresses current disparities but also strengthens Maine's social fabric by fostering an inclusive society where diversity is celebrated rather than marginalized.

By prioritizing this bill, Maine can join the majority of the country in the fight for civil rights and ensure that no resident is left vulnerable to discrimination. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD260.

Thank you for this time.
Ms. Zawistowski