

Posie Cowan
Equal Rights Maine
LD 260

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Brooksville
March 4, 2025

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

My name is Posie Cowan. I live in Brooksville.

I am testifying today on behalf of Equal Rights Maine which is a member of the Maine ERA for All Coalition.

My organization was founded in 2016 to educate legislators and the public about the lack of constitutional protections for women. At that time few people knew that the word women was not in the Maine Constitution. People assumed women had equal rights and many still do think that is the case.

Today I want to talk about both the past and the future. In 1918 my great grandmother Sophie Meredith was arrested four times in front of the White House for demonstrating for women's right to vote. Once the 19th amendment was passed, she joined Alice Paul and other women to advocate for an Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. They knew that getting the vote was not enough to protect women from being discriminated against and that women needed constitutional protection. They were right.

My great grandmother would be shocked to learn that now, more that 100 years later, her great granddaughter would be here in front of legislators insisting that women, who are half the population of Maine, have equal rights enshrined in the Maine Constitution.

But, more importantly, as I look ahead to the future, I am extremely worried that my two granddaughters will be discriminated against as they reach employment age. How am I going to explain to them that the Maine Constitution will not provide them legal protection against sex discrimination and that they and their female friends will have no guarantee that they will receive equal pay for the same job as a male if they work in Maine.

If the Maine Constitution is not updated, they will have to work an extra three months to earn the equivalent of the yearly income of a man doing the same job. Equal Pay Day this year is March 25 because women earn 75% of men doing the same job.

Another way to look at this is that women work for free from October through December.

My granddaughters will also learn that their friends of color will have to work even more days to earn the equivalent of a male doing the same job.

I want my two granddaughters to live near me and work in Maine and NOT to choose to live in one of the other 29 states which already have a state equal rights amendment.

What do you want for your granddaughters, your nieces and grandnieces?

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 260.

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