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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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30 Association Drive, Box 190

Manchester, ME 04351

office: 207-622-3374

www.maineaap.org

February 28, 2025

Subject: LD 260: “RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law”

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a pediatric hospitalist in Lewiston, and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing today to express our support for LD 260, also known as the Maine Equal Rights Amendment. **We ask that you vote Ought to Pass on this bill.**

As pediatricians, our mission is to improve the lives of children and adolescents in Maine. We recognize that legal protections against discrimination are essential to ensuring that every child can grow up healthy, safe, and supported. LD 260 is a critical step toward enshrining equal rights in Maine's constitution, providing essential protections that will directly benefit infants, children, adolescents, and their families throughout our state.

LD 260 explicitly states that equality of rights under the law may not be denied or abridged by the State or any political subdivision based on an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical or mental disability, ancestry, or national origin. By embedding these protections in the state constitution, Maine can ensure that discrimination in any form is explicitly prohibited, and it grants the Legislature the authority to enforce these protections through appropriate legislation, reinforcing the state's commitment to upholding equal rights.

Families serve as the foundation of a child's development, and when families experience discrimination, the consequences ripple across generations. Parents who face barriers to employment, housing, healthcare, or education due to discrimination struggle to provide stable and secure environments for their children. This instability can impact a child's emotional and physical health, academic performance, and long-term opportunities. By explicitly prohibiting discrimination in our state constitution, LD 260 strengthens families by ensuring that all Maine residents, regardless of background, have equal access to the resources and opportunities needed to support their children's well-being.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of discrimination. Research has shown that experiences of bias—whether based on race, gender identity, disability, or other factors—can have profound and lasting consequences on a child's physical and mental health. Discrimination can increase stress, anxiety, and depression, negatively impact academic performance, and create barriers to accessing essential healthcare services. LD 260 helps safeguard children and families from these harms and promotes a healthier future for all Maine youth.

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Furthermore, constitutional protections offer stability and security that statutory protections alone cannot. While laws can be amended or repealed, a constitutional amendment ensures that the rights of all Maine families remain safeguarded regardless of future political or legislative changes. This long-term protection is essential in our commitment to equity and justice for all.

The Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly supports LD 260 as a necessary and meaningful measure to protect the health and well-being of Maine's children and families. We urge you to support this legislation and to affirm the fundamental principle that all individuals, regardless of their background, deserve equal rights and protections under the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson" followed by a stylized flourish.

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics