

Dr. Andrea M. Breau, PhD
Lewiston, Maine
March 4, 2025

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

My name is Andrea Breau. I'm a lifelong resident of Lewiston and I'm writing to you as a woman, a working mother, and as a professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Colby College. I write today in support of LD 260: *RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law.*

Given the alarming pace of recent federal attacks on gender justice that have rolled back and seek to actively curtail the freedoms and rights of so many in our state, Mainers cannot wait for Congress to act on a Federal ERA. While passage of the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA) was an important step toward formal equality in our state, embedding equal rights as a fundamental requirement in our state constitution would ensure substantive equality and actively address ongoing systemic discrimination – such as pay inequity, gender-rating in health insurance, interpersonal and institutional violence, lack of access to child care, and workplace inequities – all of which disproportionately impact women, especially poor, Black, Indigenous and women of color in our state.

Evidence suggests that Mainers support an Inclusive ERA for Maine. After all, Mainers ratified the federal ERA in 1974 – 3 years after the passage of the MHRA – and the vast majority of citizens support the federal ERA. Meanwhile, opposition and funding to block women's constitutional equality has and continues to originate from just two “special interests”: 1) religious institutions opposed to women's access to basic reproductive healthcare based on faith-based morality, and 2) corporate and business interests, which make billions each year from charging women more and paying them less, and which receive increasing tax breaks that have negative downstream effects on women's economic well-being, stability, and opportunity.

We have the chance to protect all Mainers against discriminatory practices – I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD260. Let's join our neighbors and be a model for the rest of the nation – “as Maine goes, so goes the nation,” right?

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee.

Andrea M. Breau