

Statement by Kathy Bonk | Brooksville, ME | March 4, 2025  
On the Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment in the Constitution | In favor of LD 260

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment 2025, LD 260.

My name is Kathy Bonk, and I am a resident of Brooksville. I have been actively working for the federal Equal Rights Amendment since it was passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification in 1972. Before retiring to Maine, I was privileged to have numerous positions in Washington, DC that allowed me to advocate on behalf of women and the human rights of all people, starting in the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, for a Presidential Commission on International Women at the Department of State, for the National Organization for Women (NOW) Legal Defense and Education Fund, and as a grantee of the United Nations agencies for women, human rights, and population as related to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

My comments are in support of LD 260.

The Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution is needed now more than ever, especially with the federal ERA stalled as supporters in Congress work to affirm ratification and recognizes the ERA as the 28th Amendment to remove the arbitrary deadline.

The Maine Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment would ensure equality of rights under the law for all people.

A Maine ERA would provide permanent protections for a wide range of personal freedoms. It would provide guardrails and a safety net to prevent federal actions from bulldozing over hard-fought rights that work to end sex discrimination and ensure privacy. This happened in the Supreme Court decision in the 2022 *Dobbs* case, reversing 50 years of access to legalized abortion in all states. Further reversals could be extended to upcoming cases on marriage equality and recent actions by the Trump administration.

A Maine ERA would ensure that current state statutes could withstand attempts to repeal existing laws on sexual and reproductive health and rights; economic and financial equality under current pay equity statutes, those on sexual violence, among others.

Most importantly, the proposed Inclusive ERA would recognize the full impact and intersection of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical disabilities, ancestry, or national origin. And, it would set in cement state legislative powers to enact legislation and secure those already in statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD260.

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