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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the proposed Equal Rights Amendment for All. I am Mary Keller; a resident of Brewer and I am here today in support of LD 260. Unfortunately, today we face uncertain times as our federal government is trying to undo hard won protections that deal with women and other minorities. I am a walking example of the historical progress that women have made during the past half century and I'm going to take a minute to share some of those positive changes with you. I graduated from high school in 1966. I couldn't afford college so I took the Business Tract and was qualified for my first job immediately. I was hired at a local bank and was told up front that as a woman, I would not earn as much as my male counterparts because they were married and had families to support. I was also not allowed to work more than an eight-hour day. My father had to co-sign for my car loan even though I was over 21. After I married in 1973, I could not obtain a credit card in my own name until that law was finally changed. I remember going to JC Penney's to apply for my VERY OWN credit card. Other advances like no fault divorce, being able to report sexual harassment and the right to safe and legal abortions followed. This Maine ERA will be one more step toward permanently codifying these advancements of human rights so that we will never have to fear being returned to second class citizenship. There really should be no debate. WE WILL NOT GO BACKWARD AS A SOCIETY!