



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the
Committee on Judiciary**

In Favor of LD 260 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an
Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That
All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law

Submitted March 4, 2025

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

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). I am testifying in favor of **LD 260 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law.**

The Maine Council on Aging is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members that recognizes and celebrates the rich diversity and extensive experience of older people in Maine.

As an advocacy and policy organization dedicated to ensuring that we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives as we age, we acknowledge that older people who experience systemic bias and economic injustice during their lives because of their race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, and national origin often have fewer resources and limited choices and opportunities later in life than those who do not.

In 2022, the Muskie School of Public Service published a data report on the Economic Security of Older Women in Maine, prepared for the Maine Women's Lobby Educational Fund and the Maine Council on Aging.¹ This report documents the devastating impacts of lifelong economic gender disparity on older women in Maine and nationally. Specifically, the report shows that more than half of the 50,000 Maine women (65+) who live alone do not have enough money to meet their basic needs.

The challenges facing many older women in Maine are the direct result of historic and ongoing inequities in the workplace which resulted in women being paid less than their male counterparts. The 2025 Investopedia report *Gender and Income Inequality* acknowledges that the pay gap between men and women has narrowed since the 1960's but remains significant and that gap is amplified for older BIPOC women.²

¹ <https://mainecouncilonaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Economic-Security-Older-Women-in-Maine-Report-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.investopedia.com/history-gender-wage-gap-america-5074898>

Women are more likely to leave the workforce to be caregivers. A 2023 study by the Federal Reserve of Minneapolis titled *Who's not working?* found that 14% of the women aged 25-54 are full time caregivers as compared to 1.5% of men the same age.³

Much of our security later in life comes from our earning potential in our younger years. When women are systematically disadvantaged over a lifetime this security can remain out of reach. The very women who have built our communities often can no longer afford to live in them as they age or feel secure knowing that their post work income is sufficient to meet their needs.

This legislation will be a significant step in assuring that the reality for future generations is more equitable.

I urge you to act in support of LD 260.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2023/whos-not-working-behind-the-full-time-caregivers-leaving-the-workforce>