



March 31st, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Honorable Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change.

We are here today in support of LD 1121, **"An Act to Ensure Equitable Access for All Caregivers to Diaper Changing Stations in State Buildings Open to the Public"** and we thank Representative Collamore for sponsoring this important bill. We were deeply grateful that this committee voted "Ought to Pass" on a similar bill last session and are hopeful for your remaining commitment on this proposal.

When Maine Women's Lobby hosts an advocacy day at the State House, we send out a document we call the "Maine State House Survival Guide" which includes a wide range of information on accessibility, such as where elevators are located, where someone can find a gender neutral bathroom and where someone can chestfeed. We share this info because we know that **government buildings were not designed with inclusivity and accessibility in mind, and that many need this type of information to know how to prepare for their time at the State House.**

Lack of accessible infrastructure for parents and caregivers can be a barrier for parents, caregivers and families. Recognizing the importance of accessibility for parents, in 2014, Congress passed the Bathroom Accessible In Every Situation Act (BABIES Act)¹, which requires baby changing stations in federal buildings. Beyond this, diaper changing station regulations vary from state to state and even county to county.

While general availability of changing stations is important, ensuring parents and caregivers are able to access changing stations in state-owned buildings would go a long way to ensuring that parents and caregivers voices, perspectives and participation is included and valued. There is a general lack of such perspectives in the State Legislature, for example, with only 6.75% of legislators in Maine are women with children under eighteen.²

Further, **ensuring availability of changing stations in bathrooms that are located in areas accessible by all genders is critical to promoting gender equity so that all parents have equal opportunity to care for their children.** It also acknowledges the variety of family and caregiving structures, and moves away from antiquated gender roles predicated on stereotypical "women's roles" and family structures. This inclusivity is key to ensuring the long term efficacy of this proposal and ensuring ALL families, parents and caregivers have the same opportunities.

We hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD 1121. Thank you for your consideration.

Lily Bohen James, Maine Women's Lobby

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-12202/pdf/COMPS-12202.pdf>

² Vote Mamas Foundation, 2024 "Politics of Parenthood: Representation in State Legislatures 2024" Retrieved via <https://www.votemamafoundation.org/reports/popreport2024>