



Good morning, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the State and Local Government Committee.

My name is Fatuma Hussein and I'm executive director of the Immigrant Resource Center Of Maine (IRCM), the only comprehensive culturally and linguistically specific sexual and domestic violence resource center in Maine.

I am joining you today on behalf of The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and in support of LD 794: "An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women"..

The Commission or PCSW is a nonpartisan group of government-appointed citizens who are dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in the State of Maine. These members have a knowledge of problems facing women in the State, who have experience in advocacy relating to women's issues and who provide leadership in programs or activities that improve opportunities for women and girls.

One of the key responsibilities of the commission is to prepare a biennial report for the legislature that reflects the current status of women and girls in Maine and aims to recommend policy options that will improve the health and well-being of women and girls.

We currently have 14 members who devote significant time volunteering to ensure that policymakers have the tools and knowledge to make important decisions. However, our collective volunteer time is not enough. We are mothers, caretakers, professionals, and advocates. We are here because we care about gender inequity in our communities and hope to support the Maine Legislature in creating good laws that work for real people.

The PCSW in Maine was established in 2010. Other New England states have similar bodies, particularly Massachusetts and Vermont. Massachusetts has a budget of over one million dollars with five full-time staff and one part-time employee. Vermont has a \$405,000 budget with three full-time employees.

Since 2010, the Commission has operated without any funding and extremely limited administrative support. Without such support, the Commission's ability to meet our mission is severely limited. Most of us work full-time jobs in addition to this work and have limited capacity to oversee the management of the Commission and to implement large projects well, such as research on the status of women, producing our bi-annual report, and advocating on policy

Despite these challenges, the Commission had worked extremely hard to present a report to the 130th Maine Legislature. When drafting these reports, it was evident the Commission lacked the funding and capacity to collect and analyze original anecdotal and empirical data.

One full-time position within State Government is critical to providing the Commission the time and access to collect, analyze, and present the necessary data regarding the status of Maine women and girls. It will also help us publish our findings in an accessible way. Our work is to assist the Governor and the Legislature in crafting responsive policy solutions.

**Thank you and please support LD 794**

**Current PCSW members include the following:**

Kate Elmes, Trekkers, Commission Chair ♦ Fatuma Hussein, Immigrant Resource Center of Maine ♦ Jill Randall, Legal Services for the Elderly ♦ Samantha Lott Hale, Girl Scouts of Maine ♦ Rebecca Austin, Safe Voices ♦ Maulian Dana, Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador ♦ Jill Barkley Roy, EMERGE America ♦ Moriah Geer, Maine Equal Justice ♦ Jennifer Wilkey, Woodworker at Woodhull of Maine ♦ Darylen Cote, Retired Educator, ME DOL State Workforce Board Women's Employment Committee ♦ Meredith Strang Burgess, Burgess Advertising & Marketing, former Maine State Legislator ♦ Susan Mackey Andrews, Facilitator, Maine Highlands Investment Partnership ♦ Dr. Ruth Kermish-Allen, Maine Math and Science Alliance ♦ Dania Bowie, Maine Women's Lobby, Maine Inside Out ♦ Anne Gass, Independent Historian.

The commission recognizes the full spectrum of self-identified women in the state of Maine.

[Maine.Gov/SOS/Womens-Comm](http://Maine.Gov/SOS/Womens-Comm)

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