



Maine Women's Lobby



March 31, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government,

I join you today in support of LD 794, **An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**, on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby, EqualityMaine, and MaineTransNet. Thank you to Senator Vitelli for sponsoring this important bill.

Over the last year, our Coalition has supported a number of proposals that share two key themes:

- **Integrating the experiences, perspectives, and unique needs of the LGBTQ+ community into statewide systems** (such as bills updating the parentage act or ensuring appropriate health care); and
- **Creating consistency in statewide infrastructure where it affects gender equity and the LGBTQ+ community** (such as bills to create consistency in the Maine Human Rights Act and across statewide forms).

**LD 794 helps further both of those goals.** The majority of the LGBTQ+ community identifies as women, and make up 6.4% of the adult population in this country.<sup>1</sup> Yet the lives of lesbian, bisexual, trans, and/or queer women and girls, and their unique challenges to wellness, prosperity, and opportunities are severely underrepresented topics in public discourse.

By expanding the membership of the Commission to include an individual from the LGBTQ+ community, this bill ensures that the **unique lived experiences of LGBTQ+ women are represented within the Commission** and on biennial status reports. It also expands membership to include a young Mainer, affirming the **Commission's dedication to women's and girls' multidimensional identities**. Finally, by creating and funding a staffed role within the Commission, it ensures that the **body can be a more meaningful hub for interagency systems and data collection regarding gender equity**.

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<https://www.statista.com/statistics/719697/american-adults-who-identify-as-homosexual-bisexual-or-trans-gender-by-gender/#statisticContainer>

Together, these two elements will help Maine better address the needs and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community, and the state will have access to more robust and meaningful information and resources regarding the status of Maine women.

**We hope you will vote Ought to Pass on LD 794, and thank you for your consideration.**

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague, Maine Women's Lobby

*And on behalf of*

EqualityMaine  
MaineTransNet