



Department of the Secretary of State

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL

Testimony Provided by Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State

In support of

L.D. 794, “An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women”

March 31, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. I am Secretary of State Shenna Bellows. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of L.D. 794, “An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.”

The Department of the Secretary of State has had the privilege of housing the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women since 2010. Since its inception this 17-member group have taken on the responsibility of crafting and promoting programming meant to support women throughout the state. Additionally, the Commission is charged with advocacy at all levels of government to ensure laws and policies take the challenges and realities women face into account.

This bill seeks to add two additional seats to the Commission’s membership, removes outdated language, and would establish an Executive Director position. It is imperative the Commission have a full-time position within state government more easily navigate and collect data regarding the status of Maine women and girls across state agencies from inside state government. These findings are critical to assist in crafting responsive policy solutions that impact women. Having a dedicated Executive Director would allow the Commission to carry out their duties more effectively and be able to make continued progress on their priorities. Moreover, the addition of two members would allow for inclusion of voices that do not yet have a guaranteed seat at the table but who are also impacted by laws and policies enacted by our government.

For these reasons, we are in support of this bill. I am happy to answer any questions or get additional information to the Committee ahead of the work session. Thank you.