



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Holly T. Sargent in support of*  
**LD 1412, Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution  
of Maine Establishing That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights  
Under the Law**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary. I am Holly Sargent and I represent District 147, which is two-thirds of the town of York.

I stand before you with lingering disbelief and deep disappointment.

I was a young girl growing up in Windham when, in January of 1974, Maine became the 31<sup>st</sup> state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Democrats and Republicans had joined together for the necessary two-thirds vote, and I remember I was proud. Of course, then we thought we were on our way to the magical number of 38 states that would enshrine the rights of half the population in the U.S. Constitution.

Alas, we were not.

Since that time, more than half of the states have put protections regarding gender into their state constitutions.

Alas, Maine has not.

So, I stand here nearly 50 years since the original vote in disbelief. I am not proud, but I am determined. This must not stand.

I'm a bit weary this morning because I decided to read our Maine Constitution last night. I didn't realize that we have 175 Amendments. 175. Dry reading! But with all of those amendments, we could not pass one to protect and defend the equal rights of 50% of all Mainers.

And make no mistake, that is REALLY what we are talking about. Ensuring EQUALITY. Equality of protection under the law, equality of equal pay for equal work, equality of opportunity, equality of respect as full human beings.

“Oh, don’t be ridiculous,” some argue. “Maine women don’t need the ERA. Look- they are flourishing: a Senator, a Governor, a Secretary of State, a Speaker of the House. NO! NO! NO!

Haven’t we learned? Leaders come and go. Political parties come and go. Statutes come and go. We see it across this whole nation. But BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS should not COME and GO. They must be put into the Maine Constitution. The women of Maine should not be invisible in our own constitution.

So it is time to step up. This affects all of us! We all have mothers. Many of us have sisters and wives and daughters. Can we look them in the eye and say they don’t deserve to be equal? If someone can, then shame on them.

Passing LD 1412 ensures that all Mainers have equal value and are present in our Constitution- at last.

Let’s make Maine proud, and in this most critical issue- LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE.

Sincerely,

Rep. Holly T. Sargent (147 York)