



Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

February 10, 2025

Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry introducing

LD 135, "An Act to Provide Compensation to Members of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to Enhance Equitable Commission Participation from Across the State"

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23 in the Legislature, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am here to introduce LD 135, "An Act to Provide Compensation to Members of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to Enhance Equitable Commission Participation from Across the State."

This bill changes the language that states Commission members cannot receive compensation for serving. It allows members of the Commission to receive compensation equal to the legislative per diem and be reimbursed for qualified expenses.

Maine's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women provides a critical service for the people of Maine. It is charged with generating a bi-annual report and shining a spotlight on how Maine's women are faring in our modern economy and more. The non-partisan, independent Commission also advocates for policies that improve opportunities for women and girls, and offers guidance on how we can better support them. Since its creation in the 125th Legislature, however, the work done by the Commissioners is done while balancing all of life's many other demands.

This bill seeks to provide members with the same per diem that we get in the Legislature and would ensure that commission-related expenses won't come out of these volunteers' pockets. It is ironic that the organization whose research tells us that unpaid caregiving work largely falls on Maine women and that full-time women workers make 83% of what men make, is doing its work largely unpaid with barely the resources to reimburse its contributors for a sandwich. Members of the Commission serve from every corner of this state. There is wonderful regional representation. Current members make the commitment and drive from Caribou, Pittston, Harrison, Dover-Foxcroft among other towns--it is important we encourage and support rural representation.

In their December report on women's labor and economic security, the commission found that despite progress, Maine women still earn less and are more likely to live in poverty.

The scope of the Commission is more important than ever but is compromised by a lack of funding. The message we send by not supporting its work is damaging. Anyone listening to this testimony who has a daughter would be forgiven for being deeply concerned about the future.

This bill is a good start to allaying those fears. Maine needs the unvarnished, data-driven information provided by the Commission. My hope is that one day we can provide staffing in order to broaden the scope and increase the output of the Commission. In the meantime, providing Commission volunteers with this reasonable token of appreciation and respect will make it easier for them to continue their vital work.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to take questions.