



Maine Human Rights Commission

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March 3, 2025

The Honorable Anne Carney, Senate Chair
The Honorable Amy Kuhn, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: An Act to Update Major Policy-influencing Positions Within the Maine Human Rights Commission – LD 284

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

The Maine Human Rights Commission ("Commission") is Maine's quasi-independent, neutral, apolitical State agency charged with enforcing our state anti-discrimination law, the Maine Human Rights Act, 5 M.R.S. §§ 4551, *et seq.* ("MHRA"). The Commission is statutorily charged with the duties of: investigating, conciliating, and at times litigating protected-class discrimination cases under the MHRA; promulgating rules and regulations to effectuate the Act; and making recommendations for further legislation or executive action concerning infringements on human rights in Maine. 5 M.R.S. § 4566(7), (11). With those duties in mind, the Commission is pleased to provide this testimony in favor of LD 284, *An Act to Update Major Policy-influencing Positions Within the Maine Human Rights Commission*.

LD 284 makes one small but important change to the MHRA regarding the Commission's two Major Policy-Influencing positions by replacing the Commission's Chief Compliance Officer with Commission Counsel. This is necessary and appropriate, since there has not been a Chief Compliance Officer at the Commission for at least a decade, and that position is currently not funded. The Executive Director and Commission Counsel together are essentially the Commission's executive management team. They set the agency's policy and ensure the agency meets its statutory directives. Additionally, Commission Counsel drafts all agency-submitted bills as well as its rules and regulations. It follows that Commission Counsel would be the Commission's second major policy-influencing position.

This change entails a fiscal impact of about \$13,500 over Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027, with a projected increase of about \$11,000 per year going forward, as reflected in the fiscal note attached to the bill. This is the cost of moving our current Commission Counsel from a Public Service Coordinator III to the statutory Major Policy-Influencing position.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 284. The Commission takes seriously its duty to protect the people of Maine from discrimination, and its duty to safeguard the MHRA itself. We greatly appreciate the Committee's attention and would be pleased to discuss these issues with you at your convenience, including at the work session on this matter.

Sincerely,

Kit Thomson Crossman, Executive Director

Cc: Commissioners