



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 4, 2025

Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of
LD 260, RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to
Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and esteemed colleagues of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lori K. Gramlich, and I represent the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach, House District 131. I am honored to submit this testimony as a cosponsor in support of **LD 260**.

The Equal Rights Amendment, a simple and essential proposal, is about ensuring that the Constitution guarantees equal protection and rights for all individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. In our society today, we pride ourselves on our values of fairness, equality, and justice. But without this explicit constitutional guarantee, discrimination based on sex and gender remains a possibility in ways both subtle and overt.

In the past we have heard, and we will undoubtedly hear again, that we do not need the ERA. However, history has revealed that we indeed do need to ensure that women are guaranteed once and for all equal protection under the law.

During my grandmother's lifetime, in 1920, women finally realized the right to vote. This was accomplished after years and years – nearly a century – of women fighting for this fundamental right.

In my mother's lifetime, during the 1960s, a bank could refuse to issue a credit card to an unmarried woman; even if she was married, her husband was required to cosign. As recently as the 1970s, credit cards in many cases were issued with only a husband's signature. It was not until the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 that it became illegal to refuse a credit card to a woman based on her gender. Additionally, a married woman could not divorce her husband unless he agreed to it or she could prove wrongdoing like abuse or infidelity.

We have made significant strides since those days in advancing gender equality, but there is still much work to be done. We know that women face systemic barriers and inequalities in areas like pay, employment opportunities, reproductive rights, and access to health care. We see the impact of gender-

based violence, wage gaps, and other forms of discrimination on a daily basis. These issues are not just theoretical—they are real, tangible challenges that affect the lives of people across our state.

And, sadly, we know that even the progress we have made does not guarantee our hard-fought rights into the future. As we speak, there are concerns about how legislation under consideration in Congress could affect the ability of married women who have changed their names to register to vote. We cannot take anything for granted.

Passing the ERA in Maine is an important step toward ensuring that all individuals have equal access to opportunities and protections under the law. With the ERA, we can help create a future where no person is treated as lesser due to their gender, and where gender-based discrimination is unequivocally prohibited at the highest level of our legal framework.

This movement is not just about ensuring fairness for women, but about strengthening our society for everyone. It is about recognizing that gender equality is fundamental to human rights and justice. It is about sending a clear message that, here in Maine, we will not tolerate discrimination in any form.

I urge you to support the passage of the Maine Equal Rights Amendment and to take this critical step toward a more equitable and just society for all. Let us be leaders in this cause, showing the nation that Maine stands for equality, fairness, and justice for every person, regardless of their sex or gender.

I mentioned my grandmother, my mother, and I will now look to the future and mention my daughter: My hope is to give all our daughters and sons true equity under the law. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me.