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Testimony of Representative Suzanne Salisbury in support of
**LD 260, Resolve, 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

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am Sue Salisbury, and I represent House District 128, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to support **LD 260, Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law.**

When I was first elected to the Legislature, the phrase “drinking from a fire hose” was spot on. I found it hard to realize that my beliefs were not codified in law. It felt like I was saying to myself multiple times a day, “That’s not already a thing?” when considering policies that I felt strongly about. Our dear friend Lois Galgay Reckitt introduced me to the Equal Rights Amendment. She shared with me the history and the work she had done to try and make this change. I could not believe it was not yet law.

In the 130th Legislature, I naively believed that the Equal Rights Amendment was a no-brainer and would pass through quickly. How wrong I was. I heard comments on the House floor that this was an unnecessary amendment, things weren’t like they used to be, and there was no need to offer protection to someone based on their sex. The measure failed.

In the 131st Legislature, the proposal was brought back again. This time offering “equal rights based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical or mental disability, ancestry or national origin of an individual.” I thought, “There we have it!” when we expanded the scope of what who we included in the Equal Rights Amendment. I was confident that surely, people have to agree that there are individuals in this state who face discriminated because of their identity. As we know, the motion failed again.

Now, here we are in the 132nd Legislature. I have learned so much since my first term; I know now that not everyone feels how I do. I recognize that some of my colleagues don’t believe that there is any discrimination happening here in Maine. Some of my colleagues even feel that

because we follow Maine Human Rights and because we accept and embrace transgender people, we are discriminatory.

This is a critical moment in our history where there is mounting discrimination against marginalized groups in our country, and it is time for Maine to do what is right. It is time for us to agree that all Maine residents should have equal rights under the law. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 260 so we can finally codify the Equal Rights Amendment in the Maine Constitution.

Thank you for your consideration.