

## Written Testimony LD 260

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Judiciary. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Riss Bickford, from Westbrook, Maine. I'm a Documentarian, a person in recovery, I am disabled, I am queer and I'm here today in support of LD 260.

My introduction and identity alone speaks to the importance of this bill. From the dawn of this country I have been an invisible paper. To find ancestors like me I have to read between the lines. My history is erased. This is why I create art and document my queer community now. I see our struggles - how we are 20-30% more likely to develop substance use disorder, how we are more than 4 times more likely to commit suicide than our straight counterparts. All this stems from our erasure, lack of acceptance, and discrimination.

But if our community at large - if our State - where to take a stand and lay a foundation that says NO, we are here, we exist, we have rights, we can have a documented paper trail that our future ancestors proudly look back upon; we take a step towards saving lives.

Validations of our existence through equal rights is a basic quality of life. This strengthens community and sets a shining example of kindness, love, and protection in unprecedented times.

I hope you all get to feel the lightness in your soul when you truly find yourself and a safe space to let that version of yourself be free. Let's expand that safe space as wide as we can and see how beautiful our state can really be.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD260. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Marissa (Riss) Bickford  
Westbrook, Maine