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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Marge Kilkelly, I live in Dresden. I am a politician, farmer, policy wonk, rural advocate, and woman.

I am testifying in favor of **LD 260 - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law**

The Constitution was created to outline the structure of government and the rights of individuals. By including equal rights in the Constitution we increase clarity, accessibility, consistency, and enforceability of those rights.

Some will argue that this is redundant- but I believe that rights that are not articulated and enshrined in our foundational document do not exist – especially for marginalized populations. When rights are afforded they must be documented to create a single, reliable source of information regarding legal protections that is readily available to the public and legal professionals, eliminating ambiguity, and ensuring uniform application across different situations.

This is not a new conversation. **250 years ago Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John**, who was developing the body of law for the new country. She was at the time raising their children by herself, concerned about the small pox epidemic that was impacting their friends and family, and managing the couples farm and businesses.

Her admonition to “not forget the ladies...” is a small part of her letters. She is clear that when women or any population are not specifically addressed in law their rights are left up to individuals, with some of those individuals taking full advantage of the situation. She requested that the lawmakers of the new country be more generous and favorable to women than your ancestors. (had been)

As she rightly points out those men who willingly give up the title of Master to Friend are not the issue. Her plea is for those people in charge of policy (only men at the time) should be willing to create a body of law that removes the power of the vicious and the lawless.

*That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. **Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex.***

As we know – John Adams responded - *In return he tells me he cannot but Laugh at My Extrordnary Code of Laws.*

Later as she wrote to her dear friend Mercy Otis Warren

*He is very sausy to me in return for a List of Female Grievances which I transmitted to him. **I think I will get you to join me in a petition to Congress.** I thought it was very probable our wise Statesmen would erect a New Government and form a new code of Laws. I ventured to speak a word in behalf of our Sex, who are rather hardly dealt with by the Laws of England which gives such unlimited power to the Husband to use his wife Ill.*

LD 260 is not new, it is not radical- it is common sense that all people be treated equally and fairly. The request from Abigail Adams is the same as the request today-

*I requested that our Legislators would consider our case and as all Men of Delicacy and Sentiment are averse to Excercising the power they possess, yet as there is a natural propensity in Humane Nature to domination, I thought the most generous plan was to put it out of the power of the Arbitrary and tyranick to injure us with impunity by Establishing some Laws in our favour upon just and Liberal principals.*

I urge you to act in support of LD 260- and let the people of Maine have a say in amending their constitution.

Thank you for your consideration.