



February 8, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: my name is Kate Knox and I'm here on behalf of EqualityMaine, the statewide LGBTQ civil rights organization.

EqualityMaine was founded in 1984 following the tragic murder of Charlie Howard, a young man who was thrown off a bridge in Bangor just because he was gay. We have been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ community for 37 years, and we have more than 70,000 members across the state of Maine.

EqualityMaine supports LD 29, An Act To Conform the Maine Apprenticeship Program to the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, with one amendment: Section 2 of the bill should be amended to clarify that equal opportunity will be afforded to all regardless of their gender identity.

As you probably know, in 2005 the legislature amended the Maine Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, credit, public accommodation, education, and of course employment. That bill was signed by Governor Baldacci, and the law was upheld at the ballot box by Maine voters the following November.

Last summer, in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the US Supreme Court held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Our statutes on apprenticeship should conform to both state law and the Bostock decision; please vote Ought to Pass as Amended on LD 29, with an amendment clarifying that equal opportunity in apprenticeships will be afforded regardless of both sexual orientation and gender identity.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.