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Woodstock, Maine Peoples Alliance

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Roxanne Petrovich, I am a resident of Woodstock and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1711.

Before the pandemic, I worked at a fast food restaurant in western Maine. I worked hard and was even promoted to shift leader. I eventually left the job because a coworker repeatedly sexually harassed me and other women at my job. When I brought it to my supervisor's attention, I was told they wouldn't do anything about it because there wasn't any proof. Even though they were required by law to investigate and take action against sexual predators, my employers were not willing to take the necessary steps to ensure a harassment-free workplace. Instead, they completely pushed me aside.

So, I did some research myself and found out that even if I wanted to go to court, I wouldn't have been able to. I had unknowingly signed away my right to do so when I started my job. Instead, we would have to go through a closed door process called arbitration, where the rules would be set by my employer.

There was no way to make my employer respect my rights. That was when I left the job. It was a tough decision to make: I was in the process of planning a wedding, I had a young daughter - and I ended up being without an income for some time. I didn't want to work somewhere that wouldn't take an issue like this one seriously.

I know I'm not alone in this story: what I'm sharing must sound familiar to so many people. I know I'm not the only person who has experienced sexual harassment and felt like nobody was listening when I tried to do something about it.

That's why I'm here today: to speak not only for myself, but for everyone who has had an experience similar to my own. Too many workers are kept quiet because of forced arbitration. Our voices deserve to be heard and not shut down by our employers. We need the opportunity to speak up when there is wrongdoing.

I urge you all to support this bill and make sure that workers have a voice!

Thank you.

Roxanne Petrovich
Woodstock