

Samantha Lott Hale
Girl Scouts of Maine
LD 794

I am writing in support of LD794, An Act to Expand the Membership of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). I have had the honor of serving as a member of the PCSW for nearly ten years representing the youth seat and discussing issues impacting girls and women throughout our state with others who have brought different aspects and perspectives of women's experience to the table. No one can represent all of the experiences and challenges lived by Maine women and girls but it is the diverse representation of commissioners that makes the discussions rich and the picture more complete. The addition of two seats to the commission is important as it will bring the experience of Maine girls and women into even clearer focus by adding voices to the discussions, reports, and work of the PCSW. I feel especially strongly about adding a seat for a youth member.

As the VP of Program for Girl Scouts of Maine, I have seen firsthand the impact that youth voice has on our work. Two years ago, we started a Teen Advisory Group to help inform decisions across the council from program to marketing to our product program. This group of 8th-12th grade girls have asked and answered questions that have changed how we engage with older girls, what programs we offer, and more. They have grown as leaders themselves as they organized and presented statewide events and have given the perspectives that only they have as youth and representatives of youth culture in our society. Though in our organization, we are attuned to youth development and regularly interact with youth, the girls themselves make discussions more rich and decisions more informed.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. The expansion of the PCSW will help serve the state of Maine more effectively by adding voices to the table and by allowing the issues facing girls and women to be better communicated and understood.