

## MN ERA HF 501

### LETTER TESTIMONY

House State Government Finance and Policy Committee

Committee Co-Chair: Rep. Ginny Klevorn 42B

Committee Co-Chair: Rep. Jim Nash 48A

DATE: April 3, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Klevorn and members of the State Government Finance & Policy Committee,

As Co-Presidents of the Equal Rights Amendment Minnesota (ERAMN) organization, we are writing to document our organization's support for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) Bill HF501 before the State Government Finance and Policy Committee.

The mission of ERAMN is to work to make equal legal rights for all people a reality in Minnesota and in the United States of America by 1) adding a Minnesota ERA into our State Constitution and 2) enacting the Federal ERA as the 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution. Our Constitutions are a proclamation of our state and national foundational values, and they need to declare equal legal rights for "We the people" - and include all the people.

Currently neither the Minnesota State nor U.S. Federal Constitutions guarantee equal legal rights for all people. An explicit prohibition of discrimination on race, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, or sex, including pregnancy, gender, and sexual orientation is needed. The ERA would provide equality of rights for all people under the law.

We need the ERA to ensure equal pay for equal work, fair healthcare coverage, protection from sexual violence, and prohibition of workplace discrimination. Sex discrimination cases have gone all the way to US Supreme Court without remedy.

Twenty-nine other states currently have an ERA in their state constitutions so this is not new legal territory. There are no "unforeseen" or "unintended" consequences. California has had an ERA since 1869. Florida has an ERA. Nevada added ERA language to their state constitution in 2022. And New York passed an inclusive ERA in 2024 with 62.5% voter support. We need a state ERA to provide a foundation for legal equality for all people in our Minnesota State Constitution.

This ERA has widespread support from individuals across Minnesota, and the backing of labor, health, legal, reproductive justice, LGBTQ+, and philanthropic organizations. The time is overdue to add an ERA to our constitutions.

The Women's Foundation of Minnesota 2024 Status of Women & Girls+ in Minnesota Research Overview documented that persistent disparities exist in Economics, Safety, Health and Leadership:

- **Economics:** The wage gap facing all women in Minnesota has barely budged over the past decade. White women earn, on average, \$0.82 for every dollar that

men make. The wage gap is even larger for Black women (\$0.62); Native American women (\$0.64); Latina women (\$0.57) for every dollar that white men earn.

- **Safety:** Women and girls in Minnesota are harmed by gender-based violence across their lifetimes - in their homes, on the streets, and in schools, workplaces, and the criminal justice system.
- **Health:** The foundations of physical and mental health and well-being begin in our homes, schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces. And yet, many of these environments harbor inequities and barriers..
- **Leadership:** When we look at business, nonprofits, and government together, women make up just one in four leaders statewide.

There is an urgency to foundationally address inequality based on discrimination.

We believe that elected legislators should not be a barrier to allowing Minnesotans to vote for themselves whether or not to add the Equal Rights Amendment to our Minnesota State Constitution. Equality for all people is necessary and long overdue! Pass the ERA Bill HF501.

Thank you,

Suzann Willhite & Kate Quinlan-Laird, Co-Presidents  
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