



Testimony of American Association of University Women of Maryland

to the

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Finance Committee

in support of

House Joint Resolution 1: Affirming the Federal Equal Rights Amendment

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The American Association of University Women Maryland (AAUW Maryland) strongly supports 2024 SJ 1. Founded in 1881, AAUW's approximately 170,000 members and 1,000 branches nationwide are leaders in gender equity research, advocacy, and philanthropy. In Maryland, we have over 4,000 members and supporters and 24 college and university partners. Our Maryland members are strong advocates for laws that promote the well-being of women and children.

Most Americans mistakenly believe that women and men have equal rights under the Constitution. The 14th Amendment of the Constitution explicitly states that men are guaranteed equality under law but is poignantly silent about women. The advancement of women's equality continues incrementally through patchwork legislation and court decisions, but women's equality under law remains illusory as these laws can be changed or even revoked at the whim of legislators and judges. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would provide, once and for all, the constitutional guarantee that all men and women are truly equal under the law and that these rights cannot easily be abridged.

Sex discrimination does not have the same legal protection as other constitutional classes, such as race, religion, or nationality. This constitutional double standard means that hard-won legislative and court victories against sex discrimination are not permanent and can be rolled back or difficult to enforce.

The lack of constitutional equality reaches every aspect of women's lives. The ERA would clarify, once and for all, that sex discrimination in employment and wages, reproductive rights,

insurance, Social Security, education, and more is a violation of constitutional rights. Importantly, the ERA would also provide new opportunities to seek legal recourse when an individual faces sex discrimination and would place the burden of proof on those who discriminate instead of those fighting for equality.

In Maryland, men and women are fortunate to have equal rights guaranteed in our Maryland Constitution.

AAUW MD urges that you provide a favorable report on House Joint Resolution 1, Affirming the Federal Equal Rights Amendment. Thank you.