



663 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST
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SAINT PAUL, MN 55104
PHONE 651.789.2090

RE: Support for ERA

May 6, 2024

Dear Majority Leader Long and Members of the House Rules Committee:

Gender Justice is a legal and policy advocacy organization dedicated to advancing gender equity through the law. I am writing to urge this committee — and this legislature — to empower Minnesotans in 2026 to enshrine in our state constitution the most inclusive possible Equal Rights Amendment.

Why do we need an ERA, and why now?

In recent years, we've witnessed a disturbing trend of legislative attacks on the rights and freedoms of marginalized communities across the United States. In 2023 alone, over 1,000 bills aimed at restricting reproductive rights and attacking the rights of LGBTQ people were introduced, with hundreds enacted into law.

Some may dismiss these issues as distant concerns, but there are lawmakers in these very chambers who have proposed legislation that would severely restrict abortion access, criminalize essential healthcare for transgender youth, and criminally penalize transgender students participating in school sports.

As very recent history has shown, even small shifts in our political landscape can result in catastrophic attacks on our rights and freedoms, especially for the most vulnerable among us.

Yet, our state constitution has served as a powerful defender. Just two weeks after the fall of *Roe v Wade*, Minnesota's strong constitutional protections won a significant legal victory that has expanded reproductive freedom statewide.

Now, with the ERA language before you, we have the opportunity to add equally strong protections against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, and sex. We are confident this ERA provides robust protections for all pregnancy-related decisions, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and will be interpreted by our courts as doing so far into the future. This ERA has widespread support from individuals across Minnesota, and the backing of labor, health, legal, reproductive justice, LGBTQ+, and philanthropic organizations.

We must advance this amendment now. We are just six months away from elections that have the potential to transform, possibly radically and irrevocably, the entire political and legal landscape on which our rights and freedoms depend. And it is clear that the extremist politicians



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responsible for widespread attacks on our rights and freedoms have absolutely no intention of backing down.

There are few clearer reflections of our values as Minnesotans than our state Constitution, and it is the civic right and responsibility of the people of our state to amend it as needed to ensure that it reflects our values as fully and clearly as possible.

The ERA that stands before you would do exactly this. I urge this committee to empower the people of this state to enshrine our commitment to freedom, fairness, and equal rights in our constitution – once and for all.

Thank you for your support,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Peterson".

Megan Peterson
Executive Director, Gender Justice