

MN ERA HF 501
LETTER TESTIMONY
House State Government Finance & Policy Committee
DATE

Dear Chairs Klevorn, Nash and committee members,

Island of Discarded Women Live Show & Podcast is a variety show that aims to enlighten and inspire audiences to challenge entrenched gender and societal norms while celebrating victories won by women and girls. We do this by providing a safe platform for a diverse collection of female artists, activists and leaders in our community, both urban and rural, to share publicly their deeply personal stories and unique lived experiences through storytelling, original music, satirical commentary and candid conversation.

We write in support of the Minnesota Equal Rights Amendment, HF 501.

We urge this committee — and this legislature — to empower Minnesotans to enshrine in our state constitution the most inclusive possible Equal Rights Amendment.

Our country is facing some of the most significant attacks on bodily autonomy and self-determination we have ever seen.

On our variety show, *Island of Discarded Women*, we feature countless guests, contributors and musicians sharing deeply personal stories of the obstacles they need to overcome daily to be seen and accepted as equal members of society here in Minnesota. Women of color, women of all abilities, members of the LGBTQ community are continually fighting for their place in the workplace and in our communities. I know this fight personally having experienced workplace discrimination because of my gender and my age. When it comes to reproductive freedom, I had more rights 50 years ago, then many young women have today. Flagging the words “women” and “female” as problematic in research papers and grant applications sends a strong message to our young women and girls that you are not valued members of our society. We are losing the rights we fought so hard for decades ago.

There are those who say we don’t need an Equal Rights Amendment, that our rights are already enshrined in the MN Constitution. If that is truly so, then why are there still so many ultra qualified women of all abilities, races and sexual orientations that are not even invited to the table?

The Minnesota ERA would offer everyone the strongest possible protections against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, or sex — including pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation — no matter who’s in power in state government.

We at *Island of Discarded Women* are so grateful for the tireless advocacy, education and support that ERAMN, Gender Justice, UnRestrict MN, Outfront MN, Women’s March MN and countless other organizations have provided to those of us who are searching for a voice in this fight for equality.

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. After years of dedicated efforts to secure equal rights, it's time to trust Minnesotans and give them a say in the fight for equality.

Thank you.

Sue Scott, Creator, Producer, Host of *Island of Discarded Women* Live Show & Podcast