

**VALERIE J. LONGHURST**  
*Majority Leader*  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
15<sup>th</sup> District



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE OF DELAWARE  
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

COMMITTEES  
Ethics, Chair  
House Administration, Chair  
House Rules, Chair  
Gaming & Parimutuels  
House Manufactured Housing

**House Administration Committee Meeting Minutes**  
1.09.19

Chair Longhurst called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. Members present included Speaker Schwartzkopf and Reps. Mitchell, Short, and Dukes. For a list of speakers, please see the speaker list below.

Chair Longhurst introduced **HB 1, AN ACT PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE I F THE DELAWARE CONSTITUTION RELATING TO EQUAL RIGHTS**. Chair Longhurst, the sponsor of the bill, explained that this bill has been nearly 100 years in the making, with the first Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) being introduced in the 1920s. Delaware was one of the first states to vote for the federal ERA in 1972, but it did not get enough total votes from other states to be ratified. The Delaware Constitution does not have a specific equal rights protection for women, and HB 1 corrects this. Chair Longhurst thanked her colleagues from last year for passing this legislation. Chair Longhurst stated that the bill plainly and clearly states that rights shall not be denied because of sex. Twenty-four other states have passed similar constitutional amendments. Chair Longhurst thanked former Sen. Karen Peterson for her discussion about this subject during her time in the Senate.

Chair Longhurst opened for questions from the committee.

Rep. Mitchell offered congratulations to those who have shown a passion for this and past legislators who have worked on this legislation.

Rep. Dukes asked if the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment of the United States Constitution already covered equal rights for all people. Chair Longhurst responded that the judiciary ruling has demonstrated that gender discrimination is subject to scrutiny, and under the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, stating that a law that treats men and women differently only needs to be moderately convincing justification to pass the muster. Rep. Dukes also asked if Chair Longhurst sees this legislation at all being connected to publically funded abortion. Chair Longhurst responded with a direct quote from Dean Smolla, of Delaware Law School, stating that multiple U.S. Supreme Court cases have undergone strict scrutiny tests and determined that the states are not required to fund abortions.

Chair Longhurst opened up the floor for public comment.

Sandy Spence from League of Women Voters urged for the support of HB 1 and advocated that Delaware be a place where everyone is treated as an individual, with respect and dignity and equal access.

Linda Barnett from the American Association of University Women urged the support of HB 1, stating that the bill would ensure equality for all and would not leave less equality for men.

Mariann Kenville-Moore from the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence supported HB 1, stating that it will help advance the equal treatment of all people and further the cause to end violence in every relationship.

Amy Roe, informed the committee that she was the great granddaughter of a 19<sup>th</sup> century suffragette, and urged support of HB 1 to finish the work of her great grandmother.

Suzanne Moore from Delaware ERA Now recognized former Sen. Karen Peterson's work on this topic. She also stated that any argument against the ERA is an ignorance of female voices and that a dismissal of the ERA's impact ignores a critical role that the government must play.

Former Sen. Karen Peterson stated that in response to when people ask why this should be in the Delaware Constitution when it is already a part of the Delaware code, that the Delaware code has only 12 protections against discrimination and over 1,000 provisions that do not prohibit sex discrimination. She stated that the HB1 would be a protection in one fell swoop.

Marj Johnson, President of the League of Women Voters New Castle County, stated that HB1 is overdue and supported the bill.

Karen Lantz from the ACLU of Delaware voiced her support of the bill and hoped for its passage.

Aida Wasserstein from Hadassah, stated that she was the first person of Hispanic descent to have passed the Delaware bar as well as the first Hispanic judge in Delaware, serving at the family court. She believes that the time has come for Delaware to pass HB1 and have a strict scrutiny of standard.

Melanie Ross Levin from the Office of Women's Advance and Advocacy, stated her strong support for HB 1, believing the bill sets a tone for equality in the state of Delaware. She stated that 24 other states have passed their own ERA and wants Delaware to do this for the kids and the next generation.

Christine Shultz on behalf of Christiana Care Health System, read a letter of support from their President and CEO, Janice E. Nevin.

Chair Longhurst read out public endorsements for HB 1 including: American Association of University Women of Delaware, ACLU, Christiana Care Health System, Delaware Business Roundtable, Delaware chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Delaware Law School Women's Law Caucus, Delaware Office of Women's Advocacy and Advancement, Delaware State Bar Association, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, Delaware Trial Lawyers Association, ERA Coalition, Forum of Executive Women Delaware, Fund for Women at the Delaware Community Foundation, Hadassah Delaware, Junior League of Wilmington, League of Women Voters of Delaware, National Coalition of 100 Black Women Delaware Chapter, Network Delaware, Planned Parenthood of Delaware, Delaware Federation of Republican Women, and Progressive Democrats of Sussex County,. Chair Longhurst recognizes her female colleagues in attendance and thanks them for coming out in support.

Chair Longhurst requested a motion. A motion to release HB 1 was made by Speaker and seconded by Rep. Mitchell; motion carried. Yes - 5 (Schwartzkopf, Longhurst, Mitchell, Short, Dukes). HB 1 was released from committee with a F=3, M=1, U=0 vote.

Chair Longhurst adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Natalie Criscenzo

### **Speaker List**

1. Sandy Spence, League of Women Voters
2. Linda Barnett, American Association of University Women

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3. Mariann Kenville-Moore, Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
4. Amy Roe
5. Suzanne Moore, Delaware ERANow
6. Former Rep. Karen Peterson
7. Marj Johnson, League of Women Voters NCC
8. Karen Lantz, ACLU of Delaware
9. Aida Wasserstein, Hadassah
10. Melanie Ross Levin, DHR and OWAA
11. Christine Schultz, Christiana Care