

February 28, 2023

**Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton's Written Testimony to the U.S.  
Senate Judiciary Committee**

***"The Equal Rights Amendment: How Congress Can Recognize Ratification and  
Enshrine Equality in Our Constitution"***

Good morning and thank you to Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Graham, and the distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Juliana Stratton. I am the Lieutenant Governor of the great state of Illinois; I am the mother of four daughters, and I use she/her pronouns.

I am honored to be here today, on this final day of Black History Month and on the eve of Women's History Month, to do my part in a fight that started long before me. I stand upon the shoulders of women like Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and so many others who paved the way for the rights of all women.

They sacrificed so much to push us forward, and yet we still live in a country that does not guarantee we should be protected from discrimination in the Constitution. An explicit assertion that we are all equals is still missing, despite the women lawmakers across the nation who stood up to finish the work our foremothers started.

In May 2018, I was one of those women. As a State Representative, I joined a bipartisan vote for Illinois to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. I made it clear to my colleagues in the Illinois House that gender equality and racial equality are not a zero-sum game, that we are all uplifted when everyone's rights are protected.

We live with the stark reality that despite being the most educated demographic in the United States, Black women are [only paid 64 cents](#) for every dollar paid to white men.

There should be stronger remedies to make sure women, all women, are paid an equal wage based on their abilities and qualifications and without discrimination based on sex. These protections will be of particular significance to women of color who face more workplace discrimination than their white counterparts.

And despite impressive recovery efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened economic disparities that have already harmed women for generations. The recovery for jobs traditionally held by women have [lagged](#) woefully behind the jobs often worked by men. Also, women are [twice as likely](#) as men to work in low-paying occupations, and this rate is even higher for Black women and Latinas.

On top of this, we are seeing the eroding of women's rights and their ability to determine what is best for their futures. Recent events have shown us all too well how easily

decades of progress can be erased when our rights are not guaranteed by the Constitution.

Every parent wants their child to have a better life. That was certainly true for my late mother, Velma, who spent every day doing what she could to ensure doors of opportunity were open to me and her four children.

And now, I have a responsibility to my daughters—Tyler, Cassidy, Ryan and Mackenzie—to honor my mother's legacy and ensure they can go even farther on this journey toward equality and justice. Not just for them, but for young women and girls everywhere who deserve nothing less.

Make no mistake: Should the ERA pass, it will not guarantee that women will be treated equally overnight. We all know, for example, that the struggle continues for racial justice and equal rights for Black people and other people of color under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and women will also need to remain vigilant.

We need a firm foundation for equality that is long overdue. Finishing this work is as important as ever to acknowledge the rights that women, who make up over half of our population, so deserve.

So, I urge Congress when taking action to consider your mothers, your daughters, and the women in your districts.

It is time to make real a vision 100 years in the making, so that our daughters, and our granddaughters, and the next generation of women are seen as exactly who they are: equals.

Thank you.