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May 6, 2019

Representative Steve Cohen
U.S. House of Representatives
Chair

House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Representative Mike Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives
Ranking Member

House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Re: House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties April 30, 2019 hearing on the Equal Rights Amendment

Dear Chairman Cohen and Ranking Member Johnson,

Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, submits this testimony in full support of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in order to permanently enshrine within our Constitution the United States' values of equality, dignity, inclusion and equal opportunity for all.

Over the course of our nearly five-decade history, Legal Momentum has fought to realize full equality for women under the law. We have brought challenges under Title VII on behalf of traditional and non-traditional work forces including steel workers, flight attendants, professors, veterans, fire fighters and police officers. Recognizing that issues of sex discrimination intersect with many other forms of subjugation, we have also focused our efforts on issues including affirmative action, the military, the criminal justice system, poverty alleviation, and many other issues such as marital rape, the rights of pregnant women and victims of domestic violence, and broadening the definition of sexual harassment. In addition to working on economic equality and empowerment issues, Legal Momentum remains committed to realizing the promise of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and continues to challenge sex discrimination in educational settings. We are proud to have been closely involved in developing the landmark bipartisan legislation that became the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994—a watershed moment in seeking equality for women and girls. We have played a critical role in drafting and advocating for VAWA's passage then, and in each subsequent effort to reauthorize VAWA including the current effort to do so.

As Legal Momentum continues our 50-year mission to advance the rights of women and girls, we believe that the strength and endurance of a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the equal rights of women can no longer be overlooked. The words of the Constitution can never be adequately replaced with the acts of Congress and the Supreme Court alone. Ratifying the ERA would mean that the equal rights of women



will not be subject to the whims of divisive politics. The ERA would change the character of the debate on legislation such as VAWA by making clear that the right to be free from violence, the right to pursue economic opportunities equally, and the right to realize our full potential are not subject to negotiation.

Ensuring equality for women is one of the most important principles underpinning America's democracy. Yet it has been 229 years since women were omitted from the text of the Constitution, 96 years since the ERA was first introduced in Congress, 48 years since the ERA was passed with overwhelming bipartisan consensus by both houses of Congress, and 36 years since the last congressional hearing held on the ERA. The time to ratify the ERA is now, and we are only one state away. To that end, we strongly support the HJ res 38 to eliminate the deadline for the ratification of the ERA and believe that this resolution has the weight of esteemed constitutional scholars within the legal community.

The core principle of the ERA is simple: that women deserve to be treated with dignity. Women have been an afterthought in our democracy for too long. The need for the ERA is as critical today as it was in 1971. It is time to correct, once and for all, the omission of women's equality from our nation's Constitution and to restore women to our full potential and dignity.

Respectfully submitted,



Carol Moody
President and CEO
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund