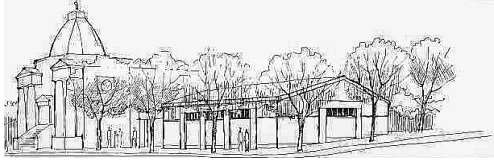


**CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
1888**



BILL SIEMERS, Rabbi

BRIAN KRESGE, President

NORI KAZDOY, Vice – President

PENNY LAMHUT, Treasurer

NANCI MILLER, Secretary

Senator Susan Collins
202 Harlow Street, Room 20100
Bangor, ME 04401

Dear Senator Collins,

Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest extant synagogue in Maine. We were founded by Jewish refugees who fled the scourge of European anti-Semitism, which impoverished and otherwise disadvantaged them. As a Jewish congregation, we are acutely aware of bigotry and oppression in all its forms; and with that in mind, we are writing to request that you give your full-throated support for the present incarnation of the Equality Act.

Over the years, you've been a firm champion for LGBTQ rights, especially when it came to ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell and voting against a Federal Marriage Amendment. You've now articulated your points for negotiation on the Equality Act, and we must urge you to revisit your priorities as you find your way forward.

With the United States Supreme Court about to hear *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, holding up the legislation over religious liberty may well be a moot point.

With congregants being parents or relatives of transgendered children in Maine schools, we also believe there is no credible basis for holding the Equality Act up over transgendered sports participation.

At Congregation Beth Israel, and throughout the Maine Jewish community, we have many members and families who would benefit from the protections afforded by the Equality Act. Members of our congregation have long looked to your leadership on these issues. We hope you will affirm your storied support for LGBTQ Mainers by supporting the Equality Act.

Representing the Congregation and its Board of Directors, we thank you for your consideration of this request,

Bill Siemers
Rabbi

Brian Kresge
President