



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS
IN SUPPORT OF
LD 731, AN ACT TO PROHIBIT MUNICIPALITIES FROM BARRING THE
CREATION OF HOMELESS SHELTERS**
Committee On State and Local Government
March 19, 2025

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of LD 731, An Act to Prohibit Municipalities from Barring the Creation of Homeless Shelters.

Homeless shelters provide critical shelter and services for Maine’s most vulnerable residents. The threat of homelessness in Maine today is both urgent and unprecedented. According to a recent Maine Housing report, “[t]he total number of people in shelters, unsheltered, and in transitional housing increased from less than 1,700 to over 2,300 in 2024.”¹ Further, “the count of Persons in Shelters increased by more than 10%,” and “the count of Persons Unsheltered remained elevated well above historic norms.”² The average length of stay in a shelter also increased by 38% in 2024 compared to 2023.³ As of November 30, 2024, about 500 Mainers were experiencing chronic homelessness, up from 370 in 2023.⁴

The burdens of homelessness fall disproportionately on Mainers of color. According to data from Maine’s 2024 Point in Time Count, people of color are dramatically overrepresented in the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.⁵ Black Mainers face especially high risks. Despite only comprising about 2 percent of the State’s population,⁶ they represent about 43 percent of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.⁷

¹ Maine State Housing Authority, *Maine Housing Outlook* (Jan. 2025) at 3, <https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/outlook-reports/2025-housing-outlook-report.pdf>.

² 2025 Maine Housing Outlook, *supra* note 1, at 19.

³ 2025 Maine Housing Outlook, *supra* note 1, at 3.

⁴ Maine Dept. of Health and Human Serv’s., Maine State Housing Authority, Legislative Report pursuant to 22 M.R.S. § 20A(7) regarding the Housing First Program (Feb. 1, 2025) at 1, <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11504>.

⁵ MaineHousing, 2024 Point in Time Count (2024) at 3, https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/homeless-reports/2024-point-in-time-report.pdf?sfvrsn=85d69e15_3.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, “Quickfacts: Maine,” 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ME/RHI125223#RHI125223>, (accessed March 19, 2025).

⁷ 2024 Point in Time Count, *supra* note 5, at 3.

LGBTQ+ Mainers also likely face disproportionate risks of homelessness. According to national data, transgender adults are almost eight times as likely as non-LGBTQ+ adults to have recent experiences with homelessness.⁸ In addition, national data show that LGB people are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness in their lifetimes than the general population, and Black and Latinx LGB people are even more likely to have recent experiences with homelessness.⁹ Maine-based data also show that LGBTQ+ youth are much more likely to have recent experiences of housing instability than their non-LGBTQ+ peers statewide.¹⁰

Finally, as Maine's 2024 Point in Time Count shows, shelters are both needed and utilized throughout state.¹¹ In other words, people experiencing homelessness are part of the community in all parts of the state. They need access to shelter in the places where they live, work, attend school, access services, or have support from family or friends. Prohibiting municipalities statewide from banning homeless shelters is an important step toward meeting this need. For all these reasons, GLAD Law respectfully urges this committee to support LD 731.

Sincerely,

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⁸ *Id.* at 3.

⁹ Bianca D.M. Wilson et al., *Homelessness Among LGBT Adults in the U.S.*, UCLA School of Law Williams Institute (May 2020) at 4–5, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Homelessness-May-2020.pdf>.

¹⁰ Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) & Maine Department of Education (DOE), *Maine: 2023 MIYHS High School Report* 951, https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Report_s_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf.

¹¹ 2024 Point in Time Count, *supra* note 5, at 5.