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Portland
LD 1328

Good afternoon, members of the committee. My name is Michael Lakowicz, and I'm here today to speak in strong support of LD 1328, a bill to create LGBTQ+ recovery housing in Maine.

I want to share a bit of my story with you—not because it's unique, but because it's one of many like it.

I grew up here in New England in the 1990s. I was lucky in many ways. I had a supportive and loving family, and I never felt physically unsafe in my home or community. But at the same time, the broader culture around being LGBTQ+ felt dangerous. I didn't see people like me represented in positive ways, and what I did see was often shrouded in stigma or treated as something shameful. Even with a good family, it was hard not to internalize that.

So I stayed quiet. I stayed hidden. I lived with a fear that didn't have one clear source—it just lived in the air around me. I was scared of being fully seen, and scared of what might happen if I was.

That fear and the silence it created didn't directly cause my substance use disorder, but it absolutely helped set the stage. I spent a long time trying to numb feelings I didn't understand and couldn't safely express. Eventually, substances became the way I coped.

When I finally reached a place where I could ask for help, I was incredibly fortunate to find an LGBTQ+ affirming recovery residence. That environment made all the difference. For the first time, I felt like I didn't have to leave parts of myself at the door. I could be honest about who I was, what I'd been through, and what I needed to heal.

Being seen and accepted—without judgment—was one of the most powerful parts of my recovery. It allowed me to fully engage in the process, to show up as myself, and to build real connections with others. Today, I have more than two and a half years of sobriety.

But I know that what I found—a safe, supportive, LGBTQ+ inclusive recovery space—isn't something everyone in Maine has access to. In fact, it's still too rare. And for people who are already vulnerable, who are trying to climb out of addiction while also navigating identity and stigma, the lack of a safe place to land can be the thing that keeps them from making it at all.

That's why LD 1328 is so important. This bill would help create more spaces where LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery can be supported, affirmed, and safe. These are not just homes—they are lifelines. They are places where people can rebuild their lives with dignity, without having to hide who they are.

I urge you to support this bill. Because everyone deserves a chance to recover in an environment where they are safe, accepted, and free to be themselves.

Thank you for listening to my story, and thank you for considering this critical step forward for recovery and inclusion in Maine