

Hello Representatives,

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on this bill as it is an issue near to my heart and my community as well as many of those across Maine. My name is Riss Bickford. I am a trans, nonbinary person in recovery, a documentarian and a resident of Westbrook Maine.

In 2024 I directed the film *Recovery in Maine, Queer Voices* in tandem with Points North and Govern Mills' Administration. Through the course of filming we found queer people throughout the state struggling to find and build accepting places to heal and recover from substance use disorder - something that disproportionately plagues our population.

In my own recovery journey I found anonymous programs to be extremely gendered places where I had to edit my story for fear of judgment, on the kinder end of the spectrum, or violence, at the worst end of the spectrum. And no matter how accepting a place claimed to be, it was never quite the same as places lead and built by queer folx themselves. When I found queer-lead meetings, that is when I found recovery and sobriety that stuck.

In order to heal we have to be vulnerable, we have to be our whole selves. We need safe spaces with understanding of who we are to do the dang thing!

This is why queer focused sober living spaces are *imperative* in recovery infrastructure.

If we are to truly address the opioid epidemic in our state. This is a key feature that needs to be implemented.

Everyone deserves healing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Link to the film: <https://vimeo.com/942998237>

Link to page about the *Recovery in Main* film series: <https://pointsnorthinstitute.org/recovery-in-maine/>