

Valencia Dumas
Sanford
LD 1328

In support of LD 1328 - An Act to Create Housing and Recovery Services for LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Committee,

My name is Valencia Dumas. I am a transgender woman and a person in long-term recovery. I've spent years not only rebuilding my own life but also dedicating myself to helping others do the same. I'm on the cusp of graduating from college and have proudly served as a Recovery Coach, using my lived experience to guide others toward stability. I've also worked with the York County Treatment Court because I believe deeply in second chances, in systems that heal, and in the power of community-based support.

Despite everything I've achieved—and I've worked hard to get here—it often still doesn't seem to matter. I've been denied housing, had job offers rescinded, and even had my background pulled illegally by employers. The message I keep receiving is clear: no matter how qualified, how capable, or how committed I am to giving back, simply existing as a transgender woman can still put a target on my back.

Right now, there are members of this Legislature actively trying to strip gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act. That's not just symbolic. That's terrifying. It tells people like me that our safety, our dignity, and our rights are up for debate. And while I can't speak for everyone under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella, I can speak to what it's like walking through this world as a trans woman in recovery—and I'm telling you, it's dangerous.

Recovery is about more than just staying clean. It's about building a life worth staying clean for. It means feeling safe in your skin, in your own home, in your community. But for trans people—especially those without family support or stable housing—that kind of recovery often feels out of reach. We face not only the challenges of addiction but also the daily trauma of navigating a society that treats us like we don't belong.

That's why LD 1328 is so critically needed.

This bill creates something we desperately lack: safe, affirming recovery housing created by LGBTQIA+ people in recovery, for LGBTQIA+ people in recovery. Spaces where we are not treated like liabilities, but like human beings worthy of healing. Places where our trauma is understood, our identities are respected, and our safety isn't up for negotiation.

These residences won't just be shelters—they'll be foundations for hope. They'll say to people like me: "You matter. Your life matters. And your recovery is worth investing in."

I've done everything I can to contribute to this state I call home. I served my country in combat, and when I came home, I kept serving—this time in my community. I've worked in the courts, gone behind the walls of jails to help others find a way out, built up treatment alumni groups, and shown up time and again for people fighting to rebuild their lives. I've done all of this not for recognition, but because I believe we're all worth saving.

But I shouldn't have to be a veteran, a college graduate, and a recovery leader just to be treated as worthy of safety and dignity.

LD 1328 gives us a fighting chance to make recovery truly inclusive—and to make Maine a place where all of us, no matter our gender identity or recovery status, can find shelter, support, and stability.

Please vote to pass this bill. Lives depend on it.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your courage to do what's right.

With gratitude,

Valencia Dumas
Sanford, Maine