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Portland
LD 1328

Hello, my name is Sarah Erwin, and I am very glad to be here today to testify in favor of LD 1328.

I have had the immense privilege over the last few years to work with many different people in recovery, translating their stories into film and sharing those films with communities across Maine through screening events. Through this work, I have seen firsthand just how many significant barriers exist when finding a safe, supportive, and affordable place to live while seeking recovery services. I know the state is incredibly aware of these challenges, and lawmakers often consider strategies and policies to reduce the friction that surrounds accessing lifesaving services. You all have the opportunity to do that today by supporting LD 1328.

This past year, I collaborated with members of the LGBTQIA+ community to document and share their recovery stories, and I was dismayed to learn just how much more difficult it has been for queer folks to access truly safe recovery services. There is already so much stigma associated with seeking help for chaotic substance use. For queer people, that is compounded by the marginalization they experience simply for existing as themselves.

I have heard countless stories about recovery house managers making assumptions or discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender expression. This can make or break whether or not someone gets the support they need, and, ultimately, this can permanently change the course of someone's life.

I am neither in recovery nor a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, but as an ally to both communities — and particularly as an ally to those who live at the intersection of these identities — I know that this bill is a clear necessity. We have the chance to ensure that some of the most vulnerable people seeking recovery services will receive affirming, dignified, supportive, trauma-informed, sustained care. We all know that long term recovery is most likely when someone feels truly safe and accepted for who they are. If you are at all serious about recovery in this state, you should support this bill.