

James Dillon  
Portland  
LD 1328

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the housing and economic development committee.

My name is James and I'm a resident of Portland, where I work as an addiction counselor and a peer recovery coach. I'm also the founder of Queercovery, a group that creates opportunities for Queer people struggling with addiction to find support, access resources, and build community as they navigate their recovery.

My own recovery began in earnest when I moved into a sober living residence in Portland in 2022. The experience I had there was nothing short of life-changing. It was a place where I could start a safe and sober life around other people who were doing the same. It was a place where I could be held accountable. It was a place where I could make connections and get my life back on track.

It was also a place where I felt the need to mute a significant part of myself in order to get well. I didn't exactly hide my queerness from my housemates and, for the most part, I was able to blend in enough to be one of the guys. But being one of the only queer men in a very heteronormative recovery residence wasn't easy. And I think it eventually got in the way of me establishing more authentic connections and finding the deeper healing I was looking for in that kind of setting. My queerness became yet another barrier to building a strong foundation of recovery; a challenge that already has plenty of barriers.

Last year, I applied for grant funding from the Maine Recovery Council to start a recovery residence that Queercovery would operate. While I wasn't awarded the funding, it is still a dream of mine and of many in my community that such a project could come to fruition.

Not a week goes by at Queercovery's support groups where we don't hear one of our members share difficulties they've had with living in recovery housing or even being able to access it in the first place. Myself and the other facilitators of these groups have held space for our queer siblings as they've shared about times when they felt unwelcome, unwanted, and in some cases even unsafe in recovery spaces due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I implore you to support LD 1328 because it is my hope that my queer siblings in early recovery across the state will soon have more and better opportunities at the kind of safe and sober housing I had the chance to experience. That they will have more chances to live in a supportive and affirming environment where they can be held accountable, where they can make life-changing connections, and where they can get their lives back on track.

Thank you.