

Good afternoon, Representative Gere, Senator Curry, and members of the committee. My name is Nick Loscocco, I am person in recovery, and a licensed alcohol and drug counselor here in Maine. I come here today in support for LD 1328.

As I'm sure many of my friends in the LGBTQIA community will tell you, just because a house says they're "open" to this community of people, doesn't necessarily mean they actually are, or that people aren't discriminated against, or treated in ways that make them feel unwelcome anyways. Not having equal, welcoming access to housing and treatment for folks living with substance use disorder can be the difference between life and death

I actually struggled with whether to support this bill myself despite my staunch support of SUD treatment and recovery initiatives. I generally identify as politically independent, but I lean towards libertarian and often vote for republicans. I tend to be conservative with my ideas about limited government, low taxes, and responsible spending. Unfortunately, LGBT issues are one area in which I often find my views in conflict with my conservative and republican friends although we align on many other issues. Despite my support and allyship of my LGBTQIA+ friends, the reason I was hesitant about this bill is because I don't necessarily believe the government should tax us every chance it gets in order to fund every little pet project that legislators might have. My hesitancy was balanced however, by of my fundamental belief and support of the constitutional principle of equality and liberty for all.

I will venture a guess that my republican friends may oppose this proposal on fiscal grounds. To them I would beg a careful consideration. We all want responsible and effective government spending, and things like this may seem on the surface as not fitting neatly into that ideal. Don't get me wrong, unilateral budgeting is poor policy, and there are a whole lot of things that should be cut from the current budget that are wholly unnecessary and that do not provide any direct benefit for the people. LD 1328 on the other hand, I think does provide that benefit.

LGBTQIA folks have consistently been discriminated against and kept out of all kinds of spaces in which the rest of us take our occupation for granted. Every person, and every community has specific needs that's can't necessarily be met with a one size fits approach, especially in the realm of substance use treatment and recovery, and LGBT folks are no different.

Using a small amount of state housing money to give a little boost to folks who have traditionally had a harder time accessing treatment and recovery than people like me seems a small price to pay. LD 1328, is a limited, targeted proposal, with very specific requirements aimed at increasing access to life-saving services for my friends. Presented in the context of my fundamental belief in liberty and equality for all, this bill serves a valid state interest, while maintaining a limited, and fiscally responsible approach to that interest.

I urge to please vote ought to pass on this legislation.