

Karen Wyman
Hallowell
LD 1337

Testimony of Karen Wyman of Hallowell, ME in Opposition to LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters
May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Karen Wyman, and I live in Hallowell. Thank you for considering my testimony in strong opposition to LD 1337 which would exempt privately owned shelters providing emergency service to women from anti-discrimination requirements as detailed in the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA).

This bill is a manufactured distraction from the very real and urgent issues facing Maine related to emergency shelter needs. People seeking emergency shelter need accessible avenues to permanent, safe, and affordable housing, not exemption from anti-discrimination requirements. Reputable shelter providers are not asking for this exemption; they are focused on meeting the needs of the people who seek a safe place to rest. People seeking emergency shelter face many very real risks - the cold, the heat, inclement weather, displacement and destruction of their belongings, and harassment among them - and sharing shelter space with people who are transgender is not one of them. Again, this is a manufactured distraction from real issues that demand attention and action, and it is designed to pit people in need against one another.

It is difficult to find safe and accessible shelter in Maine, and it is even more difficult for trans women to find shelter. Trans women are also more vulnerable to violent harm when unsheltered. Why would we want to make it more difficult? Staff in Maine's existing shelter are skilled at ensuring the greatest degree of safety possible with their limited resources. They have been doing it for decades. Why would we want to interfere?

You have the opportunity to take an ethical and morally clear position in response to this bill and to reinforce Maine's commitment to fair treatment in emergency sheltering practices. Maine does not - and should not - discriminate. And Maine should not offer exemptions to allow discrimination. Thank you for considering my testimony, and I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1337.

Sincerely,
Karen Wyman