



May 8, 2025

Re: LD 1337, An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Brian Townsend, and I am the Executive Director of Commonspace. Commonspace offers programs for adults and families experiencing challenges related to homelessness, substance use, mental health, trauma, and legal system involvement in Greater Portland and Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties. Our programs include supportive housing, housing navigation, community recovery centers, jail reentry, emergency food and shelter programs, and harm reduction and recovery programming. Commonspace is deeply engaged with the Coordinated Entry system, and is an active stakeholder within Portland's homeless response system, including holding a position on the Executive Committee of the Emergency Shelter Assessment and Response Team

I am testifying in strong opposition to LD 1337, which purports to be a bill regarding the safety of women in single-sex shelters, and which goes to complicated and illogical lengths to tie the topic of emergency shelters to the topic of female athletes and Title IX protections. There is sufficient reason to reject this legislation solely on its lack of logic and its blatant disingenuousness. The sponsors imply an interest in the safety of women within emergency shelters but clearly do so only as a pretense for inserting language that redirects the topic back to mandated talking points from the current administration in Washington. Communities and families across this state are impacted by homelessness, and it is an insult to them to falsely imply an interest in the safety and wellness of people seeking shelter, when this legislation is clearly nothing more than an effort to chase headlines and further divide us as a state. Where was this legislation, and concern, a year ago?

If the sponsors had real concern for the safety of women in emergency shelters, they would have spoken with shelter operators. They did not. Emergency shelters in Portland support most of the individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Maine. These shelters, including shelters limited to or focusing specifically on supporting women, have successfully and non-ceremoniously supported transgender guests within their spaces for decades. While our community's shelters have many issues, including a lack of adequate funding, the shelters do not and have not experienced the gender definition of guests as any sort of challenge. This is quite simply a non-issue.

While I stand in strong opposition to LD 1337, I would encourage the sponsors to speak with people who are actually involved in the administration of emergency shelters, and work with them to address the challenges that they and their vulnerable guests are actually facing.

Please oppose LD 1337, and all such efforts to impose the federal government's priorities and values on Maine.

Sincerely,

*Brian Townsend*

Brian Townsend, Executive Director

Commonspace