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Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Julie Orrego, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street. Preble Street's mission is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and advocate for solutions to these problems. Preble Street operates 16 programs throughout Maine, and its staff works daily alongside hundreds of individuals and families who struggle with housing insecurity.

Preble Street strongly opposes LD 1432, An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act. LD 1432 would strip away protections for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals—people who already face disproportionately high rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence in housing, employment, education, and public places. Removing gender identity from the Maine Human Rights Act sends a harmful message that some members of our community are not worthy of equal and legal protection.

Many transgender individuals [experience homelessness](#) due to family rejection, discrimination, and violence against them. According to the [Advocates for Trans Equity](#), one in five transgender individuals has experienced homelessness in their lives due to housing discrimination. If gender identity is removed from the Maine Human Rights Act, it will lead to higher rates of homelessness among transgender individuals. Preble Street already serves many transgender clients, and that number will increase if the proposed amendment is made.

A report released by UCLA's School of Law, [the Williams Institute](#), stated that 70% of transgender employees experienced at least one form of discrimination at work, such as being fired, not hired, or not promoted due to their gender identity at some point in their lives. Additionally, 68% of transgender employees reported experiencing at least one form of harassment at work due to gender identity. If LD 1432 is passed, these rates will increase in Maine, jeopardizing the incomes of transgender and gender non-conforming people and putting them at higher risk of homelessness and housing insecurity. At a time when we are in a housing crisis and have limited shelter capacity, critical services will become even more scarce.

The Maine Human Rights Act ensures that everyone in our state can live, work, and learn without fear of being denied opportunity or safety simply for who they are. Gender identity was added to the Act to address the persistent discrimination faced by transgender individuals, and its removal would roll back hard-won protections.

50 years of turning hunger and homelessness into opportunity and hope

This bill does not protect freedom—it threatens it. LD 1432 does not uphold Maine's values of equality and community—it contradicts them.

Every Mainer deserves the right to be safe, housed, employed, and treated with dignity, regardless of their gender identity. Preble Street urges you to reject LD 1432 and reaffirm our state's commitment to civil rights and human decency.

Thank you for your time and consideration

