



May 8, 2025

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

My name is Emma Donnelly, and I am the Director of Florence House, a women's shelter operated by Preble Street. Throughout Florence House's 15-year history, we have supported women with different backgrounds and experiences in finding safe and stable housing, healing, rebuilding their lives, and reconnecting with their communities. We serve all women, regardless of sex assigned at birth, and help these women create plans to meet their goals.

Preble Street strongly opposes LD 1337, An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters. This bill claims to protect women, but it does the opposite. LD 1337 allows private organizations to discriminate against transgender women and girls and deny their access to critical life-saving services, such as shelter.

This bill unfairly targets transgender girls and women who are forced into homelessness and who need access to shelter services. Taking shelter away from people because of their gender identity undercuts their safety and dignity and opens the door to wider discrimination.

During my time working at Florence House, the number of transgender clients seeking services has steadily increased. In FY 2024, we served 22 clients who identified as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming individuals. So far, in FY 2025, we have served six transgender women in our emergency shelter. I have personally witnessed several instances of transgender women being assaulted in the community, outside of our shelter, sometimes having to be hospitalized for multiple days due to their injuries. These women have also been harassed or discriminated against by landlords and by residents and staff of other shelters. Florence House is proud to provide a safe, affirming space for transgender women experiencing homelessness and connect them to the support they deserve.

Every person in our community deserves access to a safe shelter. Transgender women experiencing homelessness are vulnerable to violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. According to the data, transgender women are far more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators of violence. There is no reason beyond fear and misinformation to enact this legislation.

In 2024, the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) found that homeless transgender adults increased by 217% since 2015, compared to 14.5% among cisgender people, which indicates that transgender individuals need access to shelter.

50 years of turning hunger and homelessness into opportunity and hope

Preble Street urges you to reject this bill. If this bill were to be adopted, it would directly conflict with the existing Maine Human Rights Act, which includes protections for gender identity. LD 1337 will exclude and marginalize vulnerable people in need of help. Mainers should lead with compassion, fairness, and the understanding that protecting one group's rights does not require taking rights away from another.

Thank you for your consideration.

