



Committee On Housing and Economic Development

Testimony in Support of:

L.D. 1328, An Act to Create Housing and Recovery Services for LGBTQIA+ Individuals

May 6, 2025

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Heide Lester, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support the requirement that the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) contract for the operation of at least three certified recovery residences that provide services to LGBTQ+ people and others recovering from substance use disorder and are led and governed by LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery from substance use disorder.

LGBTQ+ people have higher rates of substance use and substance use disorders compared to non-LGBTQ+ people: LGB adults are nearly twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience a substance use disorder,¹ and transgender people are almost four times as likely as cisgender people to experience a substance use disorder.² These disparities can be attributed to discrimination, the pressures of minority stress, and lack of access to healthcare.³ Specialized residences can offer services that address the unique needs of the LGBTQ+ community, including mental health care, identity-affirming support, and trauma-informed care, and in fact studies show the efficaciousness of culturally competent, LGBTQ+ tailored treatment programs.⁴ However, of the nearly 100 MARR (Maine Association of Recovery Residences) certified recovery residences in Maine, only 13 houses have indicated that they serve LGBTQ+ individuals seeking recovery housing.⁵

Growing evidence shows that peer support services improve outcomes for people in or seeking recovery from substance use-related problems.⁶ By ensuring there are recovery residences that are specifically designed to provide services that meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, and requiring these residences to be led by LGBTQ+ individuals in recovery, members of our community will be more likely to find recovery housing that is safe, affirmative, and responsive. We urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on L.D. 1328 to give all Mainers seeking recovery housing access to housing options that are supportive.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

¹ Bastian Rosner et al. "Substance Use among Sexual Minorities in the US – Linked to Inequalities and Unmet Need for Mental Health Treatment? Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)." *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 17 Dec. 2020, sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022395620311316.

² Wanta, Jonathon W., et al. *Transgender Health*, Nov. 2019, liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/trgh.2019.0029.

³ Paschen-Wolff, Margaret M., et al. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, Jan. 2024, doi:10.1186/s13011-023-00581-8.

⁴ Williams, Natasha D, and Jessica N Fish. "The Availability of LGBT-Specific Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment in the United States." *Health Services Research*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7704474.

⁵ "Find a Residence." *Maine Association of Recovery Residences*, mainerecoveryresidences.com/certification-1.

⁶ Eddie, David, et al. "Lived Experience in New Models of Care for Substance Use Disorder: A Systematic Review of Peer Recovery Support Services and Recovery Coaching." *Frontiers in Psychology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 13 June 2019, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6585590.