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Testimony of Representative Nina Milliken supporting
**LD 1328, An Act to Create Housing and Recovery Services for
LGBTQIA+ Individuals**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and friends and colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Nina Milliken, and I am proud to represent the communities of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Sedgwick, Surry and Trenton in the Maine House. I am happy to be here today as a cosponsor of **LD 1328, An Act to Create Housing and Recovery Services for LGBTQIA+ Individuals**.

I'm also here as someone in long-term recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). I know how important safety, support and community are to successful recovery and that is why I stand firmly in support of LD 1328. Recovery can be a hard process — especially in the beginning. We all know that recovery is not one-size-fits-all. LGBTQIA+ individuals face unique challenges: higher rates of substance use disorders, often due to trauma, discrimination or family rejection. Accessing safe and affirmative recovery services and housing is oftentimes not an easy task for this group or other individuals belonging to marginalized communities.

I don't know anyone who has suffered with substance use disorder who does not also have pretty significant trauma. Indeed, living with SUD is in and of itself quite traumatic. It's not called "self medicating" for no reason. An important part of being received in a recovery community is identifying well with the people you are surrounded by. Different people experience different traumas. People who have significant histories of sexual assault, like myself, may need support for people who have experienced similar traumas. Women do better entering recovery in programs that are tailored to support the specific needs of women, and so on. Most areas of our lives are tailored to white, cis, straight, male experiences. More holistic approaches yield better outcomes.

Because of all of this, in the 131st Legislature, I introduced LD 1377, An Act to Provide Rental Assistance for Recovery Housing. Had that bill been enacted, a recovery rental assistance program would have been created with a requirement that 50% of the available funds would be provided to

marginalized groups — including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. The need for recovery housing for this group clearly remains. If the existing recovery housing landscape were able to accommodate safe and supportive recovery housing for LGBTQIA+ Mainers, we would not be here again asking the Legislature to provide the resources to meet this gap in services.

LD 1328 will close this gap by requiring the Maine State Housing Authority to contract for the operation of three certified recovery residences that are led and governed by LGBTQIA+ individuals in recovery. These homes will not only be inclusive — they will be affirming, designed with peer leadership, tailored support services and trauma-informed care. These are the elements that help people heal.

I can tell you from personal experience: When people feel safe, seen and supported, they are more likely to succeed in recovery. We need to build spaces where everyone has that chance, especially those who have historically been pushed to the margins.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1328.

I appreciate your time and consideration on this important and inclusive policy. I am happy to try to answer any questions.