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Winthrop, Maine  
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Jennifer Hodsdon, and I'm a resident of Winthrop, Maine. I'm here today in opposition of LD 1337 and LD 1432.

In the 18 years between 2001 and 2019, I worked in various roles at Preble Street, working with people who are unhoused or homeless. I did several different jobs, from kitchen to administrative offices to shelter staff. I finished up my Preble Street career by working at Florence House, which contains a single gender emergency shelter—and that is what I'm here to talk to you about today.

During my time at the women's shelter, we had several transgender women who used the shelter. I'd like to tell you what that was like.

Living in a shelter means that there is very little privacy. The women eat meals together, sleep on cots in the same large room, and use the same multi-stalled bathroom. There were rarely issues related to gender identity, but if there was an issue—if a member of the community had concerns about sharing space with a trans woman, or if a trans woman didn't feel comfortable sharing space with a woman who was prejudiced against her—we handled it on a case-by-case basis, just like we did with all conflict.

And that is exactly how access to shelters should be handled: on an individualized, case-by-case basis by the competent staff who consider the needs of every person involved, and who work towards an acceptable solution that recognizes the dignity and preferences of all parties.

I would like to make sure that each one of you knows what it will mean if trans women are unable to access women's shelters. I repeatedly heard trans women say that the public shelter was unsafe for them. Without access to an emergency shelter, these women will become *unsheltered*: living in places not meant for human habitation like cars, tents, and sheds, or at the whims of whoever will let them sleep on the couch for a week or a night. Or worse, outdoors.

Trans and gender non-conforming people are *already* more likely to be unsheltered in Maine. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, in Maine 87% of homeless trans people are already unsheltered. If passed, this bill will increase that number. In Maine, we know the implications of being unsheltered in the winter. Every year we read their names during our annual vigil on the longest night of the year. Access to appropriate shelter in Maine is quite literally life or death.

The Maine Human Rights Act has protected gender identity since 2005, and there is no need to change it. I urge you all to vote ought not to pass on these bills. Thank you.