



Wednesday, May 12th, 2021

My name is Maya Williams, I use ey/em, they/them, and she/her pronouns, I am a social worker, and I am the sexual assault program coordinator of the MaineTransNet. Before my work with MaineTransNet I have worked with youth and adults through case management and educational programming. Now I have been working with trans survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence as well as working to educate sexual assault and domestic violence advocates, social workers, SAFE Nurses, and homeless shelter workers on trans cultural competency and promoting the survivorhood of all genders. **I am here in support of LD 1478: An Act to Decriminalize Homelessness.**

Trans people in the state of Maine struggle with homelessness at disproportionately higher rates than cisgender people; particularly transgender youth. 36% of trans people have experienced homelessness in their lives; 13% experienced homelessness in the past year; and 28% have experienced house discrimination due to their gender identity. 46% of trans people in Maine have stayed somewhere unsafe to avoid homelessness. 27.2% of trans people are on MaineCare. 12% of trans people in Maine are on SNAP and food stamps.

Each time a trans person, who already experiences obvious barriers to accessing social services, goes to jail due to homelessness, it does more than disrupt any chances of gaining said services. They are forced to experience more violence from what they have previously experienced. They are exposed to a complete lack of safety for not being detained in a facility that matches their gender identity. They may even be forced into solitary confinement, which will affect their mental health negatively despite being told they are placed there “for their own protection.”

Decriminalizing homelessness will support trans people, and all people, in seeking the services, safety, and healing they deserve. **I urge you to vote to pass LD 1478.**