

Dear Senator Chip Curry, Representative Traci Gere, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Kenzie Hayes, and I am a graduate student at the University of Maine studying Global Policy, with a focus on drug policy, gender equity, and public health. I also serve as an intern with the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP), where I work on policy efforts that expand equitable access to housing and recovery supports across the state. I am writing today to express my **strong support for LD 1328**.

As of January 2025, there are over 90 recovery residences certified by the Maine Association of Recovery Residences (MARR), yet only eight explicitly state that they are open to serving LGBTQIA+ individuals. A 2021 MARR focus group found that 3 out of 8 LGBTQIA+ participants could not find a recovery residence where they felt comfortable – so they did not access recovery housing at all. These aren't isolated experiences. They reflect systemic barriers for LGBTQIA+ people in need of affirming, identity-safe recovery environments.

The need for LGBTQIA+-specific recovery spaces is further underscored by national data. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), rates of SUD are disproportionately high in LGBTQIA+ communities.

- 39.1% of bisexual adults and 27.0% of gay/lesbian adults experience a substance use disorder, compared to 17.1% of heterosexual adults.
- These communities also face higher rates of mental illness, depression, and trauma—risk factors that are often deeply intertwined with substance use.

Despite this elevated need, affirming treatment options remain scarce. The national database DrugRehabUS.org confirms that very few facilities in Maine offer LGBTQIA+-inclusive programming, and many general providers lack the cultural competency to serve this population effectively. This results in higher dropout rates, poor retention, and continued cycles of harm. LD 1328 offers a comprehensive, equity-centered response.

Recovery should never require someone to suppress their identity just to survive the system. Housing and recovery services must reflect the realities of the people they serve. LGBTQIA+ Mainers are more likely to face discrimination, housing insecurity, and healthcare trauma—all of which contribute to elevated rates of substance use. LD 1328 directly addresses these structural issues with compassion, practicality, and care.

This bill is not just about recovery – it is about belonging. And it will save lives. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to inclusive housing and recovery in Maine. I respectfully urge you to vote **ought to pass** on LD 1328.

Sincerely,
Kenzie Hayes
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