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My thanks to Sen. Carney, Sen. Keim, and the Maine Senate Judiciary Committee for letting me speak. My name is Natasha Chart, and I've been a feminist since I realized that my early experience of domestic abuse wasn't a rare event that happened only to me, and that it had nothing to do with whether I was a good cook.

When an abusive man gets hold of a woman, he'll work to convince her that their relationship is the truest love she could be lucky enough to have, and also that she's worthless and stupid. He will cut her off from friends and family until he's her world.

After some time, maybe when she's pregnant, or has lost work, physical abuse will begin. It may take the expected form of slapping, punching, or strangulation. It may take the form of coerced intimacy or rape, which the victim will feel shamed by and is unlikely to discuss.

He may play the victim, and say she's driving him to suicide if she says no to him.

Some women manage to break free from this devastating psychic prison and seek help.

Other women may have suffered a sexual assault or a rape by a man they're not living with, though often the attacker will be known to the victim.

Women who seek services at domestic abuse and rape crisis shelters are torture victims, asking for a place to heal. This sort of abuse is correlated with homelessness for women, which increases their risk of sexual violence, and they may seek help at a homeless shelter.

With gender identity policies in place, when women show up to these crisis shelters, trying to learn to trust themselves, working to feel safe to say no, now they have to share with men who insist that they be called women. This is supposed to be about respect and inclusion for "LGBTQ" people, but it certainly doesn't represent bisexual women, like myself, who are the likeliest women by orientation to suffer domestic abuse.

In the 2003 report by the Lesbian and Gay Task Force, "Transitioning Our Shelters," which has been used as a template for implementing gender identity policies, the fears of women who are torture victims are characterized as inappropriate disrespect for men calling themselves trans women. The authors say they "believe in the ability of all people to heal from abuse," when talking about female torture victims, but they don't seem to believe these men can get over women who refuse to believe in their doctrine of human sex change.

<https://srtp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TransitioningOurShelters.pdf>

Meanwhile, the report notes that exceptions can be made for recognizing gender identities when it comes to women, since there had "been incidents of gang rape towards FtMs in men's shelters," so therefore women's shelters should also take any woman identifying as a man.

This is called a policy of respect, but there's no respect in it for women who don't claim a transgender identity.

These policies, implemented on a wave of support for redressing wrongs against LGB people, aren't going to help gay men bullied by men for so-called effeminacy. They won't help bisexual or lesbian women fleeing rough living situations. They weren't put in place with the support of the exhausted, often terrified women using these services.

I thank Sen. Keim for standing up to do something about these stealth policies that have effectively banned women-only shelters. I urge the committee to please vote yes on LD1238.