

Marianne McHugh-Westfall
Lewiston
LD 1337

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Lewiston, 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 Marianne McHugh-Westfall. I'm a resident of Lewiston, and I am here on behalf of Equality Maine. I am here today in opposition to LD 1337: An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters.

As a transgender woman living in Maine, this bill would make me less safe, and it would not make a single other woman in our state safer. Trans women like myself live with some of the highest risk of abuse of any population in the country. According to a paper published in the journal LGBT Health, "Over the past decade, survey-based research with trans women has found reported rates of physical abuse ranging from 39% to 47%, and sexual abuse rates ranging from 50% to 59%." Trans women do not commit violent crimes at a rate higher than other women. Simply put, we are not a danger to other women. Segregating us from other women protects no one. Creating an exception in the Maine Human Rights Act allowing private shelters to deny emergency services to trans women is not only an unconscionable act of naked discrimination, it will further endanger an already vulnerable population. Members of the committee, I urge you to vote ought not to pass on this bill. Thank you.