



## **INSPIRED CONSULTING GROUP, LLC**

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### **Testimony in Opposition to the Following:**

- **LD 1337: *An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters***
- **LD 1432: *An Act to Remove Consideration of Gender Identity from the Maine Human Rights Act***

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am a licensed clinical social worker, behavioral health consultant, and educator with over 25 years of experience working with youth, families, and communities across the state of Maine. I am here today to express my strong opposition to both LD 1337 and 1432, which propose deeply harmful and unnecessary amendments to the Maine Human Rights Act.

LD 1337 presents itself as a bill focused on fairness and safety, but in truth, it would create a dangerous and discriminatory precedent by exempting private women's shelters from the state's anti-discrimination laws and misapplying federal Title IX language in ways that erase and exclude trans individuals, particularly transgender women.

Across my career, I have partnered with social workers and other behavioral health providers in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence. As providers, we know firsthand how critical it is that all women—cisgender and transgender alike—feel safe and affirmed in these spaces. Trans women are disproportionately at risk for violence, poverty, homelessness, and rejection. They already face immense barriers in accessing safe shelter. This bill would legally sanction that exclusion under the guise of "safety," despite there being no credible evidence that allowing transgender women access to women's shelters puts anyone at risk.

Furthermore, using Title IX as a justification to restrict the rights of transgender athletes distorts the original intent of that legislation, which was designed to increase access—not limit it. Transgender youth, like all youth, deserve the opportunity to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity, and this bill undermines both their mental health and their right to equal participation.

LD 1432 is an alarming proposal that seeks to erase "gender identity" as a protected class under the Maine Human Rights Act. Though some may argue this change is symbolic or that protections still exist under "sex" or "sexual orientation," this bill signals a clear intent to weaken legal protections for transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive Mainers.

Let me be clear: gender identity protections are not redundant, they are essential.

As a clinician who has worked extensively with the LGBTQIA+ community, I've seen the ways that explicit legal recognition affirms a person's right to exist safely in schools, workplaces, housing, healthcare, and public accommodations. Removing that language communicates that transgender and non-binary people are less worthy of protection, less visible in the eyes of the law, and more vulnerable to discrimination and harm.

At a time when trans rights are under attack across the country, Maine has the opportunity to continue leading with integrity, compassion, and clarity. Our laws must explicitly reflect the diversity of the people they are meant to protect. Ambiguity is not protection. Erasure is not neutrality.

Both LD 1337 and LD 1432 represent regressive efforts that would weaken Maine's commitment to equality and human dignity. These bills do not enhance safety or fairness—they perpetuate fear and exclusion under the guise of policy.

I urge this Committee to reject both of these proposed bills and affirm Maine's unwavering commitment to protecting the rights, identities, and well-being of all its residents—including those who are transgender and gender-expansive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris McLaughlin", followed by the text "lcsw" in a smaller font.

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Inspired Consulting Group, LLC