

## **Joint Community Statement in Opposition to LD 1238 and in Support of Nondiscrimination in Maine Shelters**

Members of the 130th Maine Legislature: as Maine organizations concerned about the wellbeing of our community, we are strongly opposed to LD 1238, which seeks to exempt privately owned women’s shelters from the definition of a public accommodation under the Maine Human Rights Act.

Shelters across our state provide a critical safety net to women experiencing housing insecurity, abuse, or violence. Allowing Maine women to be turned away from a shelter because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or transgender status—as this bill would do—would needlessly put them at risk of increased violence, harassment, illness and even death.

Both the nondiscrimination law and Maine Housing Regulations require all women to receive the services they need. However, if this bill greenlights even a few women’s shelters to engage in discrimination it would be incredibly harmful to these women, and contrary to the very purpose of Maine’s shelter network to take in all women in need safely and securely.

And if, as appears to be the case, this bill is targeting transgender women particularly for exclusion then it would cause heartless and severe harm to transgender women for no legitimate purpose. In the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 36% of transgender people in Maine reported having experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that transgender women report experiencing intimate partner violence at more than double the rate of cisgender women<sup>2</sup> because of their marginalized status. This bill would deny the crucial safety net that shelters can provide to women at exceedingly vulnerable points in their lives and the recognition of our common humanity that our nondiscrimination laws reflect.

The Maine Human Rights Act exists to protect Maine residents who are vulnerable to discrimination, because we believe in the fundamental principles of treating everyone with fairness, dignity and respect. The organizations that operate vital shelter services in our state are there to provide safety and security. We should not invite discrimination by creating an exemption that allows shelters to turn women away when they are at their most vulnerable and most in need.

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<sup>1</sup> NAT’L CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUAL., *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Maine State Report* at 2 (June 2017), <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-MEStateReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See Sarah M. Peitzmeier et al., *Intimate Partner Violence in Transgender Populations: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Prevalence and Correlates*, 110 AM. J. OF PUB. HEALTH e1 (Sept. 1, 2020) (finding that “compared with cisgender individuals, transgender individuals were 1.7 times more likely to experience any IPV [intimate partner violence], 2.2 times more likely to experience physical IPV, and 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual IPV.”)

**Signed:**

ACLU of Maine  
Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services  
Caring Unlimited, serving York County  
Disability Rights Maine  
EqualityMaine  
Family Violence Project, serving Kennebec and Somerset Counties  
Frannie Peabody Center  
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders  
Health Equity Alliance  
H.O.M.E. Inc.  
Hope and Justice Project, serving Aroostook County  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
In Her Presence  
Mabel Wadsworth Center  
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence  
Maine Community Action Partnership  
Maine Council of Churches  
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council  
Maine Equal Justice  
Maine Family Planning  
Maine Inside Out  
Maine Mobile Health Program  
Maine Women's Lobby  
Maine Service Employees Association  
MaineTransNet  
Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW) – Maine Chapter  
New Hope for Women, serving Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox and Waldo Counties  
Next Step Domestic Violence Project, serving Hancock and Washington Counties  
North Atlantic Conference  
OUT Maine  
Partners for Peace, serving Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties  
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England  
Portland Adult Education  
Portland Outright  
Preble Street  
Safe Voices, serving Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford Counties  
Shalom House, Inc.  
Southern Maine Workers' Center  
Through These Doors, serving Cumberland County  
Wabanaki Women's Coalition  
Waldo Community Action Partners