

**Testimony in support
LD 1238: An Act To Protect Women's Single -Sex Shelters
May 6, 2021**

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Karen Vachon and I am the Executive Director of Maine Right To Life, located in Auburn. We support LD 1238: An Act To Protect Women's Single-Sex Shelters, and we thank Senator Lisa Keim for introducing this bill.

Maine Right to Life is a state affiliate of the National Right To Life Committee. We are a non-profit organization founded to protect and uphold the dignity and worth of every human life from conception to natural death by making abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia socially, ethically, and legally unacceptable and to actively promote positive alternatives. We are Pro-Life, Pro-Active, and Pro-Women.

We are sensitive to transgender women and care deeply for their mental health and physical well-being. There needs to be a careful balance that addresses the protection of biological women as well. This said: Women's only schools, housing, and programs have a special place, and for good reason. Some biological women need the extra security, for a variety of reasons, knowing they are safe among women who share their same biology.

While we recognize transgender females emotional needs as women and are sensitive to the emotional changes they are going through, this bill begs us to ask: how do we protect against more sinister attempts to gain access to women by those who identify as women to gain access to harm biological women?

This bill addresses women's single-sex shelters only. It doesn't ban transgender females from all shelters. Unisex shelters may be better equipped to offer gender neutral toileting, bathing, and sleeping arrangements. At a Unisex shelter, the choice of bathing, toileting, and sleeping affords an opportunity of choice – for biological males, females, and transgender, without the feeling of segregation or discrimination.

Fragile, biological women who have been sexually abused, battered, and exploited in any way, need the comfort, protection, and guarantee of safety. Women's single-sex shelters are what women, in this situation, seek – and for good reason: They expect to be rid of all risk. For the comfort and protection of our most vulnerable biological women, I humbly ask this committee to unanimously vote ought to pass on this legislation. Our most at risk biological women need and deserve this protection. Thank you.

Hon. Karen Vachon
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