

[your name and contact info here]

February 8, 2021

Marcia Fudge, Secretary  
Dept of Housing & Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> St SW  
Washington, DC 20410

RE: Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation

Dear Secretary Fudge:

As you conduct your review ordered by President Biden, I urge you to protect the privacy, dignity, and safety of women made homeless by poverty and violence. These vulnerable women should not be sheltered with men who identify as women. President Biden has called for science-based and anti-discriminatory public policies. Shelter placement based on someone's subjective sense of himself, rather than biology, is not evidence-based, places women at unnecessary risk of sexual harassment and assault, and therefore discriminates against women.

Research shows that better than 85% of men who identify as women retain their male genitalia and the 2015 US Transgender Survey indicates that a majority retain their sexual interest in women. Communal sleeping and bathing facilities common in many shelters put women who are housed with men claiming female identity at risk of voyeurism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Already a [lawsuit has been filed](#) by nine women who were sheltered at Poverello House in California, alleging sexual harassment by a man housed with them who identified as a woman. The women report that the man made lewd comments about their bodies in communal dressing areas outside showers, and that he spied on them through cracks in shower and toilet stalls.<sup>i</sup>

The extent of these problems is unknown. An anonymous volunteer at a Maine homeless shelter for women recently [published an article](#) in *Feminist Current* describing the behavior of men claiming female identity at the shelter:

*One man leered at women and trailed them through the shelter, his shorts manifesting the tangible proof of his interest... Another man would wait in the bathroom to be alone with a woman and then proposition her, on the off chance that she might be willing to give him a blowjob...*

*In another case, women complained that a man was watching pornography on his cell phone and visibly masturbating in the bed area at night.*

*On at least three occasions, men staying at the women's shelter threatened to kill women with guns. Once, a man, enraged at female staff for insisting that he adhere to shelter rules, stormed into the kitchen during dinner, grabbed a tray of food, and began hurling handfuls of scalloped potatoes around the room while yelling that we were all "bitches" and "cunts."<sup>ii</sup>*

The volunteer reported that complaints from women at the shelter are not recorded, the men are not confronted, and those making the complaints often chided for "transphobia." The women's shelter was established due to the problem of rape and assault at the mixed sex shelter.

Many women are made homeless when escaping male violence. Studies find that for between 22 and 57% of all homeless women, domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.<sup>iii</sup> More than 80% of homeless mothers with children report experiencing domestic violence.<sup>iv</sup> Male presence is detrimental to the recovery of these women.

The United Nations *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (1993) calls on states to take all “appropriate measures” to promote the “safety and physical and psychological rehabilitation” of women who have been subjected to male violence. The *Declaration on Women’s Sex-Based Rights* (2019)<sup>v</sup> [defines these measures](#) to include “provision of single-sex services and physical spaces.” Sex is defined by the United Nations as the “physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males from females” (Gender Equality Glossary, UN Women).

Women seeking shelter require privacy, safety, and dignity separate from men, including those who claim female identity. We therefore urge you to mandate sex-segregated shelters in your revised policies and regulations.

Best regards,

[your signature with your name typed below]

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<sup>i</sup> Appleton, Rory. October 12, 2018. “Women Accuse Poverello House of Allowing Transgender Resident to Sexually Harass Them.” *The Fresno Bee*.

<sup>ii</sup> A. September 13, 2020. “Protecting Men at the Women’s Shelter.” *Feminist Current*.  
<https://www.feministcurrent.com/2020/09/13/protecting-men-at-the-womens-shelter/>

<sup>iii</sup> Wilder Research Center (2004). *Homeless in Minnesota*, 2003, 22; Center for Impact Research (2004). *Pathways to and from Homelessness: Women and Children in Chicago Shelters*, 3; Nat’l Center for Homelessness & Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians’ Network (2003). *Social Supports for Homeless Mothers*, 14, 26; Inst. for Children & Poverty (2004). *The Hidden Migration: Why New York City Shelters are Overflowing with Families; Homes for the Homeless and Inst. for Children & Poverty* (1998). *Ten Cities 1997-1998: A Snapshot of Family Homelessness Across America*, 3.

<sup>iv</sup> Aratani, Y. (2009). *Homeless Children and Youth, Causes and Consequences*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

<sup>v</sup> *Declaration on Women’s Sex Based Rights* (2019). <https://www.womensdeclaration.com/en/declaration-womens-sex-based-rights-full-text/>