

Sarah Coupe In favor with amendment

An Act To Ensure the Quality of and Increase Access to Recovery Residences

Greetings Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Sarah Coupe and I am here today as a representative of the Maine Association of Recovery Residences (MARR), a Maine non-profit. MARR is the state affiliate of the National Alliance and our mission is to provide support in helping residences provide quality support for people with SUD and AUD.

I am also the founder and director of the Grace House for Women, which is a Level Three (Highly-Structured) Certified Recovery Residence program that has been successfully supporting women into long term recovery since 2010.

I want to thank Representative Bellows for her efforts to define the term "recovery residence" in statute and to recognize the *need for a set of standards with which to hold people accountable in following safety and ethical ^{guidelines}*. In my opinion, these two items are the primary concerns in this industry of rapid growth. This bill would be a major step toward helping people to identify which recovery residences are investing cooperatively to the healthy growth of this industry. The public transparency afforded by our certification will be continually monitored by MARR.

Although I am here in favor of this bill, there is one part that I strongly believe needs to be amended. Section 40 entitled reads:

"The Maine State Housing Authority shall develop a pilot project to provide a short-term rental subsidy to a person recovering from substance use disorder.... to reside in a recovery residence, ... and that provides medication-assisted treatment."

I would like to see this bill support ALL paths of recovery. I am in abstinence-based recovery and therefore feel uniquely qualified to guide women successfully along that journey. I have worked with many women who have experienced medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and have abused those drugs that others find therapeutic. Stipulating that they must accept MAT in order to get funding would put them in a difficult position of being unable to avoid constant exposure to their drug of abuse and its effects.

We suggest this part of Section 40 be amended to read, "...to reside in a [certified] recovery residence." (Delete remainder)

Regarding the proposed pilot project, we (MARR) support any plan that recognizes all paths to recovery and supports all individuals with SUD seeking recovery residence services. It is absolutely essential that any program operated by the Maine Housing Authority include all currently certified RR as well as new RR subsequently opened and certified. It would not be acceptable to MARR, the ONLY certifying body in the state, to participate in a program that only served new RR.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service in speaking for people with the horrible disease of addiction. May they find the path to recovery that works lit by our beacon of hope and help!