

Amy Stevens
Saco
LD 109

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in regards to the LD 109 bill, An Act to Improve Safety for Individuals Living in Recovery Residencies.

I am not someone who struggles with addiction myself, so for that I can not speak to. I don't know what it's like to be ostracized by a community who only views you as a burden or dangerous because of a disease they didn't want in the first place. I can't tell you how debilitating addiction can become, stopping you from completing typical everyday tasks, like going to work or being able to afford food. However I can share my experience having a sibling and best friend get sucked into the pit of addiction. I can tell you how painful it physically becomes to watch my little sister struggle with drug abuse. To watch people who were supposed to be important in her life turn a blind eye and pass judgement because of the decisions she made while actively fighting with this disease. Addiction is a thing that steals your loved ones not only from you but themselves.

What I'm trying to get at here is, my sister wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for Enso Recovery. They gave her a space to CHOOSE to get better and tools to encourage staying sober. They put her in a sober house that allowed her to now say she's 9+ months sober. She's been able to hold down a job, afford to feed herself and she is no longer worrying about where she'll sleep that night. It is important, if not vital, for sober houses to remain in good neighborhoods that not only encourage a healthy lifestyle and discourage the opportunity to relapse. They also allow those in recovery to hold themselves and their peers accountable while also the basic human right to their own freedom as adults. It's imperative these houses stay affordable and amongst the community to not make individuals battling addiction feel exiled or "less deserving". The overdose rates continue to sky rocket and a huge factor in that is that it is difficult to not only receive help, but receive help that encourages long term recovery. Sober houses allow that transition between taking the first step and being able to afford their own living space, establish a career and contribute to their community the same as those not in recovery. It's a pivotal turning point for many, including my sister. I advocate for those in recovery because I've seen the nasty and saddening side effects addiction can have on someone, I know what it's like to lose your family but have them be standing right in front of you at the same time.

I want you to keep in mind, if we take away independent sober living spaces or increase rent and make it less affordable, we risk the chance of homelessness and relapse for many. Which unfortunately also increases the risk of overdose. I ask that you keep sober houses affordable, in good neighborhoods and look inward to ask yourself what it is we as a community should be doing to make sure these individuals feel more like neighbors rather than unwanted guests on their street.

Thank you for your time,
Amy Stevens