

Dear honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Danielle Duckworth and I work in the recovery community in Sanford, ME. I have a masters in mental health counseling with a focus on addictions and chose this path due to losing multiple friends before the age of 30 to the epidemic of addiction. While working in the mental health and addiction field I have seen some beautiful things and I have seen some heartbreaking things. I have seen people return to the hopeless life of addiction due to lack of resources and lack of assistance, feel completely unsupported or targetted by their state and government, or even die due to lack of beds in the state. I have also seen some beautiful things. I have seen mothers and fathers reunited with their children, I have seen the light come back into someone's eyes when they find their purpose or hope, and I have seen people find love for themselves after decades of darkness. Many of the beautiful things I have seen have occurred at a recovery residence. For this reason I am **opposed to LD 109**.

Even though I am a licensed counselor and work in an office setting, there is something about a recovery residence that allows for the continuation of therapy and lessons in the home. There is a major lack of resources in Maine which has contributed to our growing overdose rate. This law would not only put many recovery residences out of business but could potentially spike the rent for those who are already struggling to rebuild their lives in the wake of a pandemic of COVID19, an epidemic of addiction which has no cure, and an economic downfall that continues to cripple even those who have had stability for most of their lives.

Many times, I hear political leaders state their support for recovery and the “war on addiction” however, it is time to act on it. No longer are we in the age of being able to only speak, we must take action in order to have any sort of chance to beat this fight of addiction. Recovery residences give people the chance to find themselves and explore how to live a life

worth living. I won't continue to speak on that as I know many people here have first hand accounts of how a recovery residence has saved their lives.

I encourage you to think about how you have been impacted by someone in active addiction, recovery, or struggling with mental health issues. Many of these people have lived a life of let down. It would be an incredible step in the hope for recovery to oppose this act and keep Maine recovery communities thriving. Thank you for your time and I hope you are able to consider that the people affected by this could be someone's daughter, son, sister, brother, mother or father. These are all human beings who have families and hope to one day return the support to their communities.

I would like to leave you with a quote to consider. "Our lives end the day we become silent about things that matter" Dr. Martin Luther King. If we can learn anything from this quote it is to act with compassion and empathy. We have the chance to change the history of addiction, the statistics of death. I encourage you to use your voices to aid Maine and those working to recover.

Thank you,

Danielle Duckworth, LADC, CCS, LCPC-C