

TESTIMONY

In support of LD 1116, An Act to Provide Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

To: Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and fellow members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, as a Brewer Maine resident and long-standing advocate for recovery, and sober housing I am honored to provide testimony in strong in support of LD 1116, An Act to Provide Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers.

From: Joanna Russell, retired workforce development professional, Bangor Area Recovery Network, past B.A.R.N. board member and advocate, currently an owner, and manager of sober housing

My background includes being an active member of 12-step programs, and educational resources involving community-based organizations and peer support. Overall, I have been involved and supporting recovery for over 30 years. The last six years have included managing sober living homes for women, first for the B.A.R.N. at Holyoke Haven and currently at 7 Holyoke Place where I own and operate a women's sober house.

I raise the following points in strong support of **LD 1116, An Act to Provide Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers.**

- Living in a safe and sober environment allows the mother and her children space and time to heal. Once the healing begins their ability to grow and learn will expand, allowing everyone to make healthy and right choices for their lives and for the family.
- Women who are separated from their children feel discouraged and hopeless and too often revert to using substances. This decision is grounded in shame and stigma surrounding their past choices and behaviors. Once the mother has demonstrated the ability to participate and develop her sobriety, uniting her with her children is the most powerful incentive to support forward movement in a positive direction. Maine has a great need for these homes.
- The sober housing model described above benefits the mother and her children. By funding this proactive housing model for women and their children, Maine is making a huge investment in our future. Both mother and children can utilize community, education, and eventually job training resources to progress and become a member of our future workforce and be a tax paying citizen.
- This unique model allows the family (mom and children) to utilize family support which in turn enables each person to build their self-confidence and develop a new way of living clean and sober.

In closing LD 1116 serves to support Maine by acknowledging the value of family and reuniting children with their mother. We have spent a lot of time and energy on developing strong recovery support including our recovery centers, recovery coaching and resources throughout our great State of Maine. **Providing Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers and their children just makes sense as an added layer to our recovery structure.**

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide my thoughts on this very important matter.

Joanna Russell
7 Holyoke Street
Brewer, Maine 04412
207-951-5332
russelljeruss@aol.com

--