

Thank you members of this distinguished Committee and Rep. Supica, for taking the time today to address this incredibly important matter. My name is Joshua Leonard. I am currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Maine Association of Recovery Residences, Director and Operator of Portland Sober Living and a person in long term recovery. I am here to testify in favor of this bill.

An incredibly difficult issue we face in the work of recovery housing, is an understanding of how anxieties of important matters of one's life, impacts a person's ability to adequately invest in their personal recovery. Whether it be anxiety regarding recovery, employment, financial, personal, relationships, children or keeping a safe roof over their heads, one thing that we know is that if we can create an avenue to reduce impact on these fundamental points, we start to make significant change. We have seen an incredibly high disproportionate impact on certain communities, and pertaining to this important bill, we are addressing the impact on woman in recovery who have children, especially in rural areas.

The wonderful news is that there are programs out there that have set a high standard in the ability to consolidate resources to alleviate these anxieties, especially for woman in recovery. Programs that offer aid for their substance use treatment, services to assist them in seeking employment, transportation to help them get to that employment, and financial services to help them with their monetary struggles. All these services are provided in a safe home, surrounded by people who lift them up in their personal recovery and support them in their quest for prosperity. Most importantly, it is an environment where they don't have to worry if their child is safe, because their child will be safe with them, as they begin their new life in recovery.

Many people resist seeking continued recovery treatment due to matters like these. They don't want to lose a job, or don't want to be away from a spouse or significant other. Many women resist seeking further recovery treatment because they know they may not be able to see their child. This bill opens the door to break down this significant barrier. The moment we start branching services like these out to more rural communities, we bridge that gap and offer people the ability to find opportunities to effectuate a lifesaving reformation no matter where they are. I testify today as a person who has experienced exactly that. I went from a person having lost everything to a person today, beginning a career in real estate and development, becoming Director of a recovery residence and serving on the Board of a growing non-profit. I went from running the streets of Compton to getting my very first apartment of my own. I went from a person who destroyed his family, to a person who is now reunified with them as the family we should have always been. All of this done in just the last 6 years. Imagine what 10 years from now will look like. Change will always be possible when the proper resources are available.

I urge you to vote Ought To Pass and welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you.