

Michelle Anderson
Millinocket
LD 1714

My name is Michelle Anderson, and I am a woman in long-term recovery from heroin. I lived on the streets of San Francisco from the age 14 and I was an addict by age 15 until I was 33.

I was a thief, a prostitute, and anything else that got me the money to maintain my habit. I was in and out of juvenile hall, jails, and state prison frequently.

In 1988, I went into treatment and have not felt the need to drink or use drugs since.

I am a firm believer that it is crucial to remember how bad life was before recovery; if we don't, we are in danger of returning to it.

In 2019, through a series of events that would take too long to tell you about, I co-founded Pir2Peer recovery community center in the Katahdin region with my friend Ginger.

I could tell you about all the good it's done for people in recovery or interested in recovery, but you will know about that before this hearing is over.

What I want to tell you about is how much working with people in recovery has enhanced my own recovery, how being able to pass on what I have to those who need it, and how remembering what it was like every single time I deal with them has removed my complacency in ways I never thought of.

I think that all people in recovery should be able to experience working with this population and enhancing their own recoveries.

But, unfortunately, many volunteers have to make a living and are unable to volunteer on a long-term basis because the need to buy food and pay bills. The money is limited and the needs far outdistance the money.

This kept us unable to compensate those volunteers who were once able to come in regularly for long hours. These were the people who were hungry for recovery, people we watched bloom as they got the benefits of imparting their experience, strength, and hope to those who needed it.

I was the CEO of Pir2Peer until I retired last December, and some of the hardest decisions I had to make — all too often, I might add — were between:

- * starting new programs which our people needed or giving our volunteers stipends;
- * going into the community to scout out recovery-friendly businesses or recovery-coaching people who needed us to do so; and
- * putting together holiday celebrations for those who were still not welcome at their families' celebrations and those who needed to decompress after family time or talking to business owners about helping us with donations.

Add to that the rate of inflation, a tunnel that does not seem to have a light at its end.

Most recovery centers in Maine need more money on a constant basis in order to afford all the things that are needed in order to offer the wide variety of needs to our people who want recovery.

For that reason, I wholeheartedly support the passage of LD 1714. Thank you.