

April 25, 2023  
Public Testimony  
LD 1116  
John Clark

Good Afternoon Senator Tipping and Representative Roeder and members of the Labor and Housing Committee. My name is Johnny Clark, I am a person in long term recovery, a person with a history of incarceration and I am the proud owner and operator of recovery residences in Androscoggin County. I am also the program director for the Maine Prisoner Re-entry Network and a peer support member of the Western Maine Treatment Court for Oxford and Franklin counties.

I am here today in support of LD 1116, An Act to Provide Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers . This bill would be life-changing for families in Maine. As an owner of a recovery residence, I've witnessed first hand how the traumas of generational substance use, poverty, racial injustice and lack of healthcare access harm families in Maine. When parents lose custody of their children as a result of their substance use, it is often also a result of these other factors.

Right now in Androscoggin county, I am working with an advisory group of recovery and harm reduction experts to build Maine's first apartment units for families who are looking for safe and supportive recovery housing, with comprehensive support and treatment access including counseling, childcare, financial literacy, meal planning groups, yoga, meditation, peer support, medical care and integrated services with DHHS.

However, the biggest barrier for people to access a program like this is funding. It is often assumed that recovery residences can be billed to insurance or access funding that is readily available. This is not the case. While some of these services I listed would be billable, most are not. And while I recognize the importance of providing these services regardless of ability to pay, I need to make sure that I can pay staff and utilities to operate the program in the best way possible.

This is a tangible way we can address the effects of substance use and the overdose crisis in Maine. Let's stop the cycle of trauma and harm caused when families are torn apart. Let's take a step towards protective factors for our community.

One suggestion I have, to ensure the broadest access for everyone, is to remove the requirement for "rural communities" and to consider including fathers and families in the description. We don't have programs like these anywhere in the state and by excluding locations and family dynamics, we restrict access to people desperate for change and reunification with their children.

I am urging you all today to vote in favor of this bill. I am available to answer any questions you may have and thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

John Clark, CADC