

January 29th, 2023

Dear honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, thank you for your time and consideration today. My name is Ben Burgess and I am a resident of one of Recovery Housing of Maine's sober living houses located in Auburn. I am also proud to be the house manager, and proud to be one of the 12 men living under that roof who are working to become better every day.

I always find it difficult to explain exactly how much living in a sober house has changed my life for the better. When I came into this program and moved into the house I had nothing and no one positive in my life. I didn't think I ever would again. I needed to be part of a loving and safe community who understood me, because they were very much the same. I needed someone there to lift me up on the hard days and celebrate with me on good days.

I continue to need my brothers in the house. I love being able to be there for someone who is struggling. So many of the men that we help through that struggle simply wouldn't be safe without a safe place to go. I understand the importance of live saving measures, but we cant risk losing the most effective life saving measures of all: connection, community, hope, and a safe place to recover and learn to heal. We cant risk losing houses that become homes. Homes where we find family when we need them most.

Thank you.