

January 27, 2023
Madison Weymouth

Testimony in Opposition to LD 109

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Madison Weymouth, I am a resident of Westbrook and the Assistant Program Manager at Maine Association of Recovery Residences. I am also a person in long-term recovery.

I started my journey with MARR after living in and managing a MARR certified residence. I became a volunteer Grievance Facilitator for MARR in 2021 and in January of 2022, was hired as full-time staff..

Some of you here today may not know much about what day-to-day life in a recovery residence looks like. My experience as a house manager taught me so much. I was often called to enforce the safety standards of the National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR). I administered drug-screens, built structure, and held women accountable as they began their recovery journey

Most residences operate with people working, going to school or volunteering and living very normal lives - while engaging in 12-step recovery activities, attending weekly house meetings, shopping, doing chores, cooking and cleaning...like any household.

My job today includes inspecting all 67 MARR certified residences annually and inspecting new operator-applicants for compliance with the national standard. This includes rigorous enforcement of NARR standards for home and fire safety, ethical operation, and emergency planning.

We also ensure that residents have a minimum of 50 sq feet per person in their bedroom, and a maximum of 6 persons for every full bath. This prevents overcrowding and the tensions that can come with that,

MARR can and does de-certify residences for violations. In the past few years, three situations occurred that led to revocation of certification status. Through a remediation plan, these residences were recertified. De-certification can lead to houses losing eligibility for funding from programs like Maine Housing or General Assistance housing support.

Since the passing of LD 353, MARR has had 2 fires in our certified residences due to electrical issues. In both cases, no one was injured and there were no fatalities. Like a family, residents care for each other's safety with efficient evacuation and head counts, to be sure everyone is accounted for. Quarterly fire drills help residents know what to do in case of emergency. Narcan training occurs periodically and on the day of admission for new residents. Before their head hits the pillow on the first night, they know what to do in case of an overdose.

Requiring sprinkler systems would surely lead to the closing of a number of recovery residences. We have worked hard at ensuring resident safety and have earned the trust of state officials. I ask you to continue trusting MARR as an organization to ensure that recovery is possible for individuals who want it, in a safe sober-living environment without the barriers that LD 109 will cause.

Please stand with me in opposition to LD 109.