



New Hope Alliance  
1 Riverview St.  
Sanford, ME 04073

## Testimony in Opposition to LD 109

1/28/2023

Dear Senator Bee-Bee Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Daryl Blums, and I'm a resident of Biddeford. I'm a person in recovery, and just recently celebrated 10 years. Alongside my wife Katahli, I own and operate New Hope Alliance—two MARR-certified recovery residences in Southern Maine.

I'm here today in opposition to LD 109, a proposed bill that on its face insinuates it will create safer environments for those in these residences. In truth, however, it would compromise the ability of houses to operate and strip countless people of the opportunity to find low-barrier housing in the earliest and most crucial parts of the recovery journey. To put it into perspective many of our residents indicate that this is the safest place they've lived in their adult lives.

Fire safety is already at the forefront of our collective safety concerns, but the threat of a house fire isn't the safety issue that looms largest over our recovery communities and those with SUD. A google search showed that in 2022 for every house fire death in Maine, there were over 37 fatal overdoses and that overdose data had only been compiled through October of 2022. That said house fires are tragic, and that is why MARR works so diligently with houses to create the highest level of fire safety a single-family home can provide. As an example of their thoroughness, once during a routine inspection, MARR made us remove a sock that had been lost behind a dryer in the essence of—you guessed it—fire safety! However, installing these incredibly costly sprinkler systems would likely cause many houses to close their doors.

Owning a recovery house is a tough business, while we do earn money operating these houses, both my wife and I still work day jobs. Even if every bed was filled with people paying on time it would take years before we could actually afford these systems. So, where would that money come from? The obvious and least attractive answer; the residents. Even if we were able to secure a loan the repayment would come by increasing the cost of our services, putting recovery housing out of reach for many—and to be clear when a person is exiting jail, detox, or treatment, a dollar can be out of reach.

As someone that operates recovery houses—part of what I consider to be the front lines—it feels like we are fighting two battles, our daily battle which, put simply, is just trying to keep people alive, and the other to fend off the political and municipal forces that often seek to dismantle the services that we provide. If passed this bill would cause a negative reverberation for years to come, making recovery services difficult to obtain for people with SUD, and the agencies that routinely depend on us as a safe housing option for those leaving treatment, detox, or corrections.

In closing, I ask that you stand with me to oppose LD 109, for those suffering from SUD, their families, and all those who have worked so hard for so long to create the already safe environments we provide. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have in person or by the contact info I have provided.

Thank you for your time today.

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