

Testimony of Michael Beck of Bangor, Maine on January 30, 2023

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Michael Beck. I am a resident of Bangor, Maine. I am testifying today in opposition to LD 109. I offer this testimony not just as an ally of the recovery community, but as a father raising children in the same neighborhood as a recovery home. I appreciate the work my neighbors in recovery are putting in. Not just into their own recovery, but for their contributions to our city as fellow Bangoreans. They possess a spirit of service that I admire and am grateful for. Recovery houses have made Bangor a better place.

Recovery houses provide a stable and safe environment to individuals who are recovering from addiction and rebuilding their lives. LD 109 would undo the good work this committee and the legislature did in 2019 with LD 353. It removed a financial barrier to opening more of this type of housing. If LD 109 becomes law, the financial cost of additional building code compliance could ultimately lead to the closure of many of these recovery houses. The closure of any recovery housing would be a tremendous loss to individuals who are trying to overcome addiction and would put them at a greater risk of relapse. We are in a statewide crisis with addiction and should be taking actions that expand access to recovery, not diminish it.

It has taken great courage for the people here today to share their personal stories of recovery, especially in a formal setting such as this. Throughout all of this process they have leaned on each other and supported one another. They are not strangers that simply share the same landlord and randomly pass each other in the hallways. In each of these recovery homes they look out for each other. They lift each other up. They share the same food and even take turns preparing meals. These are people who care about one another. That sounds exactly like my family. Those living in recovery houses are a family, bonded through struggle and purpose. The current Maine law that recovery homes are to be treated as a family residence couldn't be more appropriate. LD 109 would strip that away.

It is my testimony today that the financial burdens placed on recovery houses by enacting LD 109 would do tremendous harm to Maine. Not only to recovery houses and their residents, but to communities like Bangor who are beneficiaries of the spirit of service and outreach that our neighbors in recovery generously give us. I am asking this committee to reject this bill.

Thank you for your time and for the chance to speak today.

Michael Beck
Bangor, Maine