

Testimony by Kelly Cookson/Save a Life Recovery Resource Center in Approval of LD714

Dear esteemed members of the Committee on Taxation,

My name is Kelly Cookson I am the director at Save a Life Recovery Resource Center in Lincoln Because of our rural location, we try to offer as many services as possible for those with substance use disorders and their loved ones This isn't just a job to me My daughter Ava is over 6 ½ years free from her heroin and crack addiction We didn't have recovery community centers available to us in Connecticut when she first entered recovery Having a center to go to would have benefitted her and I in countless ways, especially during her early recovery which is the time when many people are very vulnerable to relapses Because she did not have those types of services available and 12 step meetings were not helpful for her, it has taken a long time for her to integrate into society as a healthy, happy, productive member Honestly it is still a work in progress She is just now beginning to plan employment when her daughter begins school and continuing her education Research has shown us that recovery community centers greatly shorten the average length of time it takes people to get to the point in their recovery where they are able to successfully manage these tasks If she had the support of a center and the resources they offer, who knows how much further along she might be in the process

Having a variety of programs would have been beneficial to her and I'm grateful I can now offer it to others Somehow Save a Life is managing to offer multiple support groups, one on one recovery coaching, activities such as yoga, art, writing and music along with harm reduction trainings and early intervention programs The reason I said "somehow" is we are a center that receives only 50,000\$ from DHHS Our barebones operating budget is 200,000\$ a year The remaining 75% of our funding comes from private donors While the donations are greatly appreciated, it is unreliable at best Sustainability to encourage substance use disorder remission, a reduction in overdose deaths and early prevention MUST include financial support

We are asking that some of that funding comes from 12% of the new tax revenue source of recreational cannabis If you aren't someone who's been personally affected by substance use disorder, you may believe the existence of recovery centers doesn't impact you You might not care I'm not here to try to change your mind about that today The data obtained by Dr John F Kelly, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and director of the MGH Recovery Research Institute, has shown us recovery community centers shorten the period of time it takes for a person to obtain remission and that it fiscally makes sense to fund them The sooner someone achieves remission, the sooner they begin to become taxpaying members of society More financing of our center would mean more outreach to those in need, and more people finding and sustaining recovery We have a critical need for employees throughout the state of Maine currently Recovery centers can assist with that, but we need to have more financial resources available, especially in rural areas such as mine where there is no public transportation and there are 13 towns and townships we are tasked with serving

Please consider the implications on all your constituents if this funding is not approved I am respectfully asking that you vote "yes" on LD 1714 Thank you for your attention to this important matter