



Freshstartrecovery-maine.org

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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, good morning.

I'm Scott Pardy, President of Fresh Start Inc. We operate 19 MARR-certified recovery residences in Bangor, Brewer, and Orono, providing 163 rooms. I'm also a past President and current board member of MARR. I'm here today to strongly oppose LD1973. This bill, as written, significantly threatens the recovery residence model and the vital work we do. I want to focus on several key concerns:

First, Section 2.5.B mandates including those ejected or denied entry. This *must* specify "from a MARR-certified residence." Without that, the commission could be influenced by negative experiences from *non*-certified facilities, which don't meet our standards.

Second, Section 2.5.D proposes including an owner/operator of a *non*-certified residence on this commission. This is unacceptable. Why should those who haven't committed to rigorous certification shape our future?

Third, Section 2.6.D includes a tenant rights advocate. While tenant rights are important, this role is distinct in recovery residences. Their concerns often conflict with our operational realities. This inclusion appears to be a tactic often used by harm reduction advocates. While I support harm reduction, recovery residences serve a different, though sometimes overlapping, purpose.

Fourth, Section 5.2 directs an "evaluation of alternative oversight models." This is a direct affront to MARR, which has worked tirelessly to establish and maintain standards of excellence. The suggestion of "licensure" is even more alarming. Licensure would impose crushing bureaucracy and costs, destroying safety and affordability, and inevitably forcing many of us underground or out of business. This would be devastating.

Fifth, Section 5.3 calls for "recommendations around policy on prescribed medications and medical cannabis." Let's be clear: in our residences, and under MARR standards, cannabis is *not* "prescribed" or "medical." It's recreational. It's a well-established fact that cannabis use can trigger relapse, leading individuals back to harder, more dangerous drug use. Cannabis makes you high. That's not recovery.

Finally, the placement of a recovery residence for individuals over 25 in a community with no job opportunities and no policy around employment is a poor decision. In my experience, we must be good neighbors, require residents to take ownership of their recovery, and require those who can work to do so. True recovery means no longer being a burden on society.

I'm profoundly disappointed that LD1973 has taken this direction. It deviates significantly from its original intent, and I fear it will have dire consequences for recovery residences and for MARR. I urge you to reject this bill. Thank you.