

Rob Korobkin
Gorham, ME - Courage House

Hello. My name is Rob Korobkin. I own and operate the Courage House in Gorham. It's a 20-bed reentry and recovery house for guys in Maine who are coming out of our state's jails and prisons. I helped a few of our residents write statements today, which some local students have been kind enough to read, but I wanted to share some of my own thoughts here as well.

When we first opened our doors a little less than two years ago, I had high hopes that if our team just did our jobs right, we'd be able to help all the guys who moved in totally turn their lives around.

Incredibly, that actually does happen sometimes. Guys move in without much more than the clothes on their back and a few dollars in "gate money." We connect them with licensed counselors. We help them get jobs in the community. A lot of our guys have injured their brains from doing street drugs for so long, and we support them in getting psychiatric care, so they can get stable again. Sometimes amazing things really do happen quickly.

But more often than not, that just isn't the story.

A lot of our guys come in with their heads rushing like freight trains. They grew up shooting meth with their mother in a trailer. They got raped as a kid. There's so much trauma and suffering and mental unwellness. They've been running for a long time. Often for decades. So they move in, they make some strides toward reintegrating into the community, something comes up, and they recycle. I don't like the term "relapse." I like the term "re-cycle." Because that's what it is for a lot of our guys, a cycle, and a well-worn one at that.

I like to tell our guys, if you start doing drugs again, you can't live here, but I'm still going to love you. If you get locked up again, call me. Any time. I have a Securus account linked to my bank account. I'll pick up if I can, and we'll talk. I'll listen. Maybe you can move back into the house when you get out. All of the current research indicates that people with substance use disorder almost always need to make multiple attempts at recovery before they're able to stop for good. They fall off, and they get back on. And so, if we want this process of reentry to work, and we want to reduce recidivism, we've got to keep the lines of communication open between the outside world and the world inside. If we do that, then little by slowly, people will get out and eventually they'll stay out. But we can't do that if the phone costs a fortune.

Please vote to support LD 1175 and help us lower the cost of these calls.

Thank you.