

Mike Ward  
Gorham, ME - Courage House

Hello. My name is Mike Ward. I'm the assistant manager of the Courage House, a 20-bed reentry house in Gorham. I struggled with drugs for almost three decades until I finally got sober last summer.

These days, I work as a roofer and serve as the assistant manager of the recovery residence that I live in. A couple months ago, a friend of mine put me in touch with a young woman at the Cumberland County Jail who was looking for a penpal. It'd be easier for me to help her if I could talk to her on the phone, but every time she calls me collect, it ends up costing me \$9, which I can't afford right now.

So we've been writing letters. I shared my story with her, and it seems like my letters are making an impact and helping her. She's only 28. I just hope she can avoid the mistakes that I made at that age. When we first started talking, she was still getting high, and she was getting punished by the correctional officers for using while she was in jail. She says she's now been sober since we started talking. I know it helps her to get my letters, but when she feels like she wants to use, a week's a really long time to wait for a letter. It'd be great if she could just call me.

As I see it, the people inside need all the same types of support as the guys in our house here. Without my counselor, my twelve step sponsor, and the support of the guys here at the house, I might still be using too. A lot of us would be happy to support folks inside, the same way that we support each other out here in the community every day. But if the phone costs a crazy amount to use, even when there are folks in recovery like me who are eager to help the folks inside, a lot of the time, we can't, at least not in the ways that we'd like to.

I urge your committee to help lower the cost of these calls by voting to support LD 1175.