

Patricia A. Kimball

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207-478-2415

Dear Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Pat Kimball and I am retired after working 30 plus years in the field of substance use disorders and mental health. I am writing today to oppose the bill LD 109 An Act to Improve Safety for Individuals Living in Recovery Residences.

When I retired, I was the Executive Director of Wellspring which operates 3 residential treatment programs and transitional apartments so I am very familiar with the difference in requirement of operating a residential program and regulations in operating transitional apartments which were purchased with Maine State Housing Funds. The administrative and financial burden it takes to operate these programs and to meet the safety requirements is huge and not an easy task. While I totally understand that these regulations were to ensure safety, these programs were very different from operating a sober home. Wellspring was a non-profit corporation with a license to operate a treatment program, most sober homes are privately owned and are meant to house only a few not many.

I believe that people in recovery deserve to have a safe and sober environment to recover but adding this kind of regulations will not only close many sober homes but will discourage others from opening one. In Maine and across the county we are overwhelmed with placing those who are unhoused in safe places, this kind of bill will only add to our increasing homeless population. I not sure why it is even necessary, as any sober home I have been in have been safe, clean, welcoming, promoting employment and self-sufficiency. When I retired in 2016, I think the Bangor area had 2 or 3 sober homes and thanks to the passion and generosity of individuals we now have over a dozen with wait lists. Many of these homes are individually owned and adding costs to operate will most likely close them and will then add to our homeless population. Sober Homes are safe, affordable and have positive results for recovery.

To quote from the Fresh Start Website who owns and operates 11 homes it says "Sober living homes have provided an open and supportive community to all who live here. We promote meaningful and fulfilling relationship through the expertise of living with other like-minded individuals in recovery". They are not group homes or residential programs they are creating new families for those in need. They are small family homes not large residential programs. They do not need any more regulation than my family home. In sober homes they have an atmosphere where they participate in activities such as game nights, sit-down dinners and community activities. They share in household chores, attend support meetings together and contribute to their portion of the financial responsibilities for the home. In my book that sounds like a family home like mine, they cook together, spent time together and support each other through what can be a difficult time. They are a family living in a home.

I would suggest to you before you add this additional cost to these homes which will cause many to close and many more from opening that you visit one and talk to those who live in the home. I think what you will find is a true love and support of each other in a welcoming, clean, and safe environment which is keeping people moving forward in their recovery. We need more of these homes not less, please consider not moving this bill forward and help support recovery throughout our state. We lose

too many people to this disease. Let's do what we should have done years ago which is give people in early recovery a fresh start in life with a warm home, a good meal and support for recovery.

I would be happy to discuss or answer any question you may have of me or my work. Thank you for taking the time to read this and for serving Maine.

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Hermon
LD 109

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