



Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Amanda Ricci. I am a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and certified crisis service provider and I own a mental health and substance use disorder agency in Livermore Falls. I am a nationally certified firefighter, fire instructor, and EMT, and for more than a decade held positions with the American Red Cross of Northern New England. Additionally, I have also started a non-profit organization and while I hope this isn't true, LD 109 seems to be a classic not-in-my-backyard effort, directly related to our efforts to open the first recovery residence in Franklin County.

As part of the process to open the house, I was asked to present to the Farmington Board of Selectman regarding our plans after submitting an ARPA application to help support the project. At that meeting, I was able to address many questions about the structure of recovery residences, shared with them that our ARPA application was (and remains) tabled and that I was going to have to regroup to create a new funding plan for the project.

In December of 2022, the organization was able to identify a new option and signed a lease agreement on a 3-bedroom, 1-bathroom house, which will house 6 men (2 per bedroom), with the hopes of opening a few weeks later. I checked in with the Farmington Code Enforcement Officer to notify him that we were opening. At that time, he asked me to submit applications to the zoning board and the planning board, as some of the people who served on these boards held the opinion that the recovery residence would be classified as a group home.

On January 11th, 2023, I appeared before the zoning board. At the meeting, I was asked questions that reiterated to me that many on the board did not understand what a recovery residence was, the protections that recovery residences have under federal law, or what the value of a recovery residence is.

Ultimately, the zoning board tabled my application, stating they would like guidance from the town's attorney on this matter, without a date to return for further discussion. The individuals involved in the many conversations I have had throughout the community and in these positions of power likely have the best interests for the safety of individuals at heart, but also may be allowing their personal opinions about substance use disorder to cloud their judgment.

Repealing LD 353 feels punitive and will stunt the growth of this much-needed service both in rural Franklin County where it is desperately needed, and has a long-reaching impact throughout the entire state of Maine for both homes already operating and those that could open in the future.

I am asking that your committee vote ought not to pass on LD 109.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely, Amanda Ricci

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