

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

I am writing today to express my opposition for LD 109, "An Act to Improve Safety for Individuals Living in Recovery Residences" I understand the need for safety in recovery residences and I believe the sponsors' intentions were good. The bill, however, has the potential for catastrophic consequences in my own community, in my district and even on my block.

As I understand it, the bill would effectively close most, if not all, of the recovery residences in Bangor and force several folks in recovery onto the street. Many of our recovery residences here are designed to help folks pursuing recovery leaving the carceral system. The support of these recovery residences is absolutely critical. We have a less than 1% vacancy rate in Bangor so people with inconsistent rental records, felonies and/or no credit history don't have a chance of finding a new apartment should recovery houses close. Recovery residences provide people with support systems critical to recovery and re-entry. Even if all current residents could find an apartment they would be without the support of a house manager, workforce navigation, grants for work clothes and laptops and regular recovery support meetings.

This is deeply personal to me. The house next door to me is one of those recovery houses. Fresh Start Sober Living has rapidly become one of the more important organizations helping folks with transitional, recovery supported homes in Bangor. I cannot imagine what it would be like for these folks to lose the loving and supportive home that they have now. They are my neighbors. They are my friends. They are the people who saw me struggle to shovel out my driveway during my first winter on my own in a new house and woke up extra early to shovel my driveway before I left for work because they wanted to help out a neighbor. They're the folks who always say hello and never fail to have a kind word to spare. They are a beloved and valuable part of our community and it would be devastating to see them lose their home.

I am not so naive as to think that all recovery residences are like the ones I know and I won't deny there are bad actors in the field. I won't deny that something has to be done to hold those bad actors accountable. I do not believe that this is the bill to do that, however. I encourage this committee to find a way to help without harming, to support the people doing the good work while holding those exploiting the system accountable. Thank you for your time and hard work and I hope you will vote ought not to pass.