



295 Water St.  
Augusta, Maine 04330

**Testimony in Favor of LD 964:  
An Act To Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder  
Recovery Residence Services**

April 6th, 2021

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Courtney Allen. I am a resident of Augusta and serve as an At-Large City Councilor. I am testifying before your committee as the Policy Director for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP). ME-RAP is a grassroots network of people across Maine working to redefine and reimagine justice, access, connection, and recovery from substance use. One of our true north organizing principles at ME-RAP is that we listen to our community and then we act. Our community includes people in recovery, people who use drugs, family members, and all of our allies.

This legislative session we have a slate of priority bills that come directly from our community members as their top priorities. One of those bills is LD 964. ME-RAP believes this bill is important because it ensures that everyone has equitable access to recovery housing through the use of general assistance funds. We know that safe and stable housing is a critical component to entering and sustaining long-term recovery<sup>1</sup> - without it many people will resume problematic substance use and potentially die from accidental drug poisoning.

To further complicate matters, in Maine there is a shortage of affordable rental apartments available to extremely low income people. The General Assistance offices across the state should fund certified recovery residences, not only because it is discriminatory not to do so, but simply for the fact that we cannot afford to lose a single bed of affordable housing options. Everything must be on the table.

We also believe that recovery residences should abide by a basic set of safety standards as outlined by the national best practices<sup>2</sup>. Under current Maine state law, anyone, anywhere can rent a house, market it as a recovery residence, and are hypothetically eligible for public monies (except from the Maine State Housing Grant for recovery residences and some municipalities general assistance offices due to the issues already outlined) - regardless of their qualifications or intent surrounding running a house. For many of our community members, houses that are not certified have caused great harm to their recovery process. We do not believe this is good stewardship of taxpayers money or helpful to people seeking recovery.

---

<sup>1</sup> Recovery and Recovery Support, SAMHSA, <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery>

<sup>2</sup> Standards and Certification Program, National Alliance of Recovery Residences, <https://narronline.org/affiliate-services/standards-and-certification-program/>



295 Water St.  
Augusta, Maine 04330

We are asking your committee to ensure that if taxpayers' dollars are being used to fund a house, that the house is responsible to an oversight body that provides a way for people living in the houses to file grievances and a decertification process in the case of ethical violations. We believe that this process helps to ensure the safety of the people living in the houses and the communities that the houses are located in.

Several states have established policies or legislation to ensure that only recovery residences that meet national standards receive state or local funding. Indiana and Pennsylvania have enacted legislation that makes the receipt of state and local funds dependent on meeting certain quality standards. While not in legislation, Ohio has also made certification a requirement in order to receive grant funds from the state and many divisions of local government require the same to be granted local public funding. Since funding for recovery housing is very limited, this has been a useful incentive for recovery homes to improve the quality of their homes, therefore protecting the people who live in them and the taxpayers who fund them.<sup>3</sup>

We are also in support of Rep. Justin Fecteau's proposed amendment to keep this bill in alignment with federal laws. Thank you for your consideration of this bill and please vote to pass as amended.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,  
Courtney Allen  
[courtney@recoveryvoices.com](mailto:courtney@recoveryvoices.com)  
(207) 593-6251

---

<sup>3</sup> Building Recovery: State Policy Guide for Supporting Recovery Housing, The National Council, [https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/18\\_Recovery-Housing-Toolkit\\_5.3.2018.pdf?dof=375ateTbd56](https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/18_Recovery-Housing-Toolkit_5.3.2018.pdf?dof=375ateTbd56)