

Rosie Boyce
Journey House Recovery, Auburn Women's House

Hello. My name is Rosie Boyce. I'm a person in long term recovery.

Twelve years ago, when I first stopped using intravenous drugs, I was blessed to have the opportunity to spend nine months living at the Crossroads Back Cove recovery residence in Portland. It saved my life, and I never had to pay a dollar for it. MaineCare paid for all of it. As a resident there, I received counseling, casework, support groups, and the kind of loving guidance that I needed to get my life back on track.

About ten years later, I had the opportunity to go back to Crossroads, this time as an employee, managing one of their programs, and today, I split my time between working professionally as a Certified Peer Support Specialist, and my job for Journey House Recovery, overseeing a six bed recovery house for women in Auburn. I love this work, and I look forward to helping to open an even larger women's recovery residence in the years ahead.

I'd like to make three points:

I know firsthand how important it is for there to be publicly funded recovery residence programs made available to survivors of substance use disorder. If I hadn't been able to go to one for free, and stay there for as long as I did when I first stopped using, I'm not sure I'd even still be alive.

That said, over the years that I've been doing this work, I've also seen a lot of really unethical and dangerous things happen in recovery residences. I didn't get into this work overnight. It took me a decade to gain the skills necessary to do this job well, and I'm still learning things every day. Standards are so important.

But three, as badly as I believe Maine needs to impose these sorts of standards, I have to admit that I have real concerns about the State trusting a private association like MARR to carry out this important work. As far as I can tell, there isn't anybody involved with the leadership of MARR who's survived the sorts of things that I have, like poverty, domestic violence and incarceration, or who even has experience running the sort of high quality, medically-integrated residential programs that I care so much about. To tell the truth, I don't feel personally represented or included within MARR, and from what I've seen, I really don't like how MARR's leadership handles conflicts within the organization, and the ways in which it seems like they try to control, instead of empower, the other members of the association.

As such, as much as I'd like to see this bill go through eventually, I strongly recommend that the members of the HHS Committee vote to table this proposed legislation until such time as the Office of Behavioral Health is prepared to offer an accountable, competent and trustworthy approach to doing this work.