



April 4, 2021

LD 964, An Act to “An Act To Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services.”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Bruce Noddin and I am the Executive Director of The Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network or MPRN, a state-wide non-profit focused on providing peer support and coordinating community resources for hundreds of individuals returning to Maine communities from prison and jail.

I am writing in partial support of LD 964, “An Act To Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services.” MPRN supports the intent of LD 964. However, Maine’s current housing crisis, including Recovery Residences, presents more nuanced challenges, not addressed in this legislation.

MPRN fully supports the Maine Association of Recovery Residences (MARR), Recovery Residences in general, and the intent of this legislation. Since Maine does not currently employ a halfway house system for citizens transitioning from prison, Recovery Residences serve as Maine’s halfway houses. Of the hundreds of men and women MPRN assists with transition from prison and jail, a high percentage choose to live in recovery residences. In our experience, MARR certified homes present the best possible opportunity for successful reentry, community transition, and recovery.

As we see it, LD 964’s challenges lie in 2 areas. The first and most challenging is General Assistance (GA). General Assistance is not consistent from community to community. Each community offers various levels of support, many, less than supportive. For these reasons, LD 964’s intention of demanding the maximum available GA assistance, in each town, will mean differing GA housing support levels, depending on the municipality’s current commitment to adequate funding for GA housing assistance. In our experience, less generous municipalities are shifting the burden of supporting people in reentry/recovery, to cities like Bangor and Portland.

The second challenge lies in fairly establishing state certification standards. Though MARR and their standards have nurtured a culture of integrity throughout Maine’s Recovery Residence community, we see a necessity for established state standards and certification. In our opinion, MARR and MSHA should play a part in the development of these standards. Ultimately though, certification should be developed and determined by an unbiased, geographically diverse group with the goal of establishing State sanctioned Recovery Residence Certifications and certification processes.

Thank you!

Bruce Noddin, Executive Director
Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network (MPRN)