



April 5, 2021

Maine Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Submitted via online portal

**Re: Support for LD 964, *An Act to Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services***

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Committee:

My name is David Sheridan, and I am the President of the National Alliance for Recovery Residences. Our organization, founded in 2011, maintains the nation's most widely adopted set of recovery housing operating standards, and operates through a network of affiliated statewide organizations. I am communicating at the request of our Maine state affiliate, the Maine Association of Recovery Residences, to provide information about recovery housing regulation nationally, including state-level models adopted by various legislatures and addiction services agencies.

Maine has already enacted statutes that promote certification through voluntary means, using national standards based on established best practices. Currently, certification is required only if an operator wishes to receive funds from the Maine State Housing Authority Operating Subsidy Program. The proposed bill (LD 964) will require certification for residences receiving public funding such as General Assistance.

This is the approach NARR and other organizations favor, as do the vast majority of state legislatures and addiction agencies that have addressed the issue. Other states in New England, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, have adopted similar measures. They have found that a strong voluntary certification and oversight capability, combined with provider incentives to become certified, offers accountability without increasing the barriers to affordable recovery housing that other regulatory frameworks inevitably impose. It ensures that public funds are spent wisely and sends a message to the public that the state supports quality recovery housing.

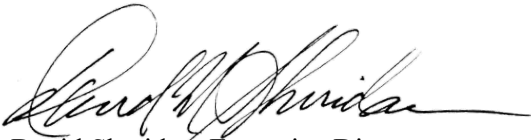
A few states currently require licensure or its equivalent for all recovery residences. Ample federal case law points to this being a violation of several federal statutes. Officials in Florida and Massachusetts concluded several years ago that they could not impose mandatory licensure without violating the fair housing rights of disabled individuals. Mandatory licensure has several unfortunate consequences including high cost, the uncertainty and expense of litigation, and the creation of barriers to low-cost residences serving low-income individuals in need.

As to certifying organizations, you have chosen an excellent partner in MARR. The organization meets NARR criteria for our affiliates which include operation of a residence certification program that is thorough and objective, effective relationships with state agencies and other stakeholder groups, and an ability to address complaints about residences it supports. The organization has grown significantly since its launch and has wide community support. In addition to oversight from your Office of Behavioral Health, they have developed productive and

accountable relationships with the Department of Corrections and the Maine Housing Authority. They have also become a contributing part of the NARR network of 30 state organizations nationally. They were instrumental in launching the New England NARR Affiliates Group, our first and only regional collaboration of state affiliates.

We support passage of LD 964 and look forward to its contribution to increasing the number of quality certified residences serving the people of Maine.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Sheridan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Sheridan, Executive Director