

LD 964: An Act To Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence, sponsored by Rep. Justin Fecteau

Testimony in Favor of LD 964:

An Act to Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Winifred Tate, I am a resident of Waterville, a professor and the director of the Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College.

I am testifying in support of LD 964.

I will not repeat the litany of statistics here to convince you that Maine is in crisis. You know that it is, as more Mainers die daily from drug overdoses than ever before, with thousands more continuing problematic drug use without access to the support and treatment that they need and want.

We have a consensus that problematic substance use and substance use disorder are public health problems that require public health solutions. Access to housing and recovery supports is a critical part of this public health approach.

At the Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College, we are involved in researching the impact of drug policies in local communities, and the experiences of women who use drugs and women in recovery. We have heard over and over again the critical role of stable housing in beginning and maintaining recovery. And I have interviewed women who, when they could not find stable housing, escalated problematic substance use and ended up incarcerated.

Across Maine, there is a shortage of affordable rental apartments available to extremely low income households. Access to housing is even more difficult for people leaving treatment centers. For people experiencing problematic substance use disorder, leaving jail or prison and having a criminal record is an additional barrier to housing. People with problematic substance use often do not have steady employment.

Allowing people to access General Assistance for recovery housing is vital to breaking this cycle.

Recovery housing is not just stable housing, it is housing that provides additional support, including facilitating access to recovery meetings and a space with like-minded people.

However, unregulated recovery housing has contributed to problematic outcomes. We need a standard certification to ensure that people who are receiving state support get the housing, and the services, they need.

Decades of research and the lived experiences of thousands of Mainers are clear: we need greater state support for people seeking recovery, and certified recovery housing for them to thrive.

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Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College

The Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College brings together policymakers, scholars and students, providing evidence-based analysis for addressing critical drug policy issues in our state and beyond, and conducts research on problematic drug use and access to treatment in Maine.