

Leslie Clark  
Portland Recovery Community Center

TESTIMONY OF Leslie Clark  
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Executive Director of the Portland Recovery Community Center

To the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services

In Support of LD 488: A Resolve To Expand Recovery Community Organizations Throughout Maine

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Rep Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Leslie Clark and I am the Executive Director of the Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). The PRCC provides direct support to thousands of people in recovery at our center in Portland, and coordinates and supports new and developing recovery community centers throughout Maine through the Recovery Hub. Personally, I am a person in long term recovery from alcohol and drugs and know firsthand the power of connection with others in recovery to find and sustain long term wellness and freedom from addiction. I am testifying today in support of Senator Chloe Maxmin's bill, L.D. 488, to open seven additional recovery community centers in Maine.

Recovery Community Centers aren't just a nice idea. Recent research from Dr. John Kelley at UMass / Harvard demonstrated that people who participate in recovery supports at recovery community centers, especially people in early recovery, experience improved functioning, quality of life, and psychological health. PRCC was one of the centers included in the study. In Maine, through PRCCs recovery hub, we've found that members who participated in recovery coaching through their local recovery community center, reported that their happiness in life rose over 22%, the support they got from friends rose over 27%, and their pride in their community rose over 15%.

Recovery community centers are a place where people connect with others in recovery, experience a sense of belonging, discover new ways of living, join a support group, volunteer their time, and help educate others about addiction and recovery. Recovery Community centers help link people to housing, jobs, primary healthcare, and treatment. It was in recovery community centers that peer recovery coaching was created and developed along with telephone recovery support. These peer delivered services are core to every recovery community center within the country and in Maine.

In 2017, PRCC became an independent nonprofit governed and operated by people in recovery. Our board of directors envisioned a time when every community in Maine would have a recovery community center, and we set to work to collaborate with others to see that dream come true. We formed the Maine Recovery Hub at PRCC and were awarded state funding to help coordinate recovery support to 7 new centers. Today there are thirteen centers currently open in Maine, and we are working with several more communities to help them establish their own. For example, York County is poised to establish their own center, and PRCC has been and continues to help see that dream become reality.

There are thousands of people in recovery in Maine, and thousands more who are still suffering. Those of us in recovery who have broken the silence to speak out as people in recovery do so for one reason only, to spread hope and share the message that recovery is possible. We believe that with community connections, resources and support, it is more than possible, it is probable. That is why access to recovery community centers in every county in Maine is so important.

Please support Maine's recovery community by voting to support this bill. Thank you.

I am happy to answer any questions.

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