

susan parks
Augusta

April 7, 2021

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health & Human Services Committee:

My name is Susan J. Parks. I live in Augusta, Maine. I write in favor of L.D. 488 to open a recovery community center (RCC) in Augusta, Maine. The reason I am in support of this L.D. is

because I have had direct experience with a former neighbor-friend who had a substance use disorder with opioids and, despite the help of his family and neighbors, died of an overdose.

In the winter of 2018, a new family moved across the street from me. A month or two later, a lot

of late-night car traffic at the family's home gave great concern to the neighbors who contacted

the police and began submitting anonymous tips to the Augusta Police Department (APD).

The

neighbors, including me, speculated that the traffic had to do with illegal drugs, since the visits were quick, with the car left running in the driveway, and individuals leaving the home with small

packages. In February of 2019, an attempted murder occurred at the home; the police were not called; the injured person was dropped off at Maine General, and when the hospital saw the

wound (a wound inflicted by another person), called the APD. By the time the APD arrived in our neighborhood, the house, which we believed was a "trap house", had been cleared of any drugs.

The on-going late-night car traffic at the home and the attempted murder terrified our neighborhood. We met with an APD police officer in charge of the case and were told that the APD had to have "eyes on the drugs" for probable cause to search the house. The neighbors continued to provide anonymous tips to the APD.

As another tactic, the neighbors decided to meet with the owner of the home (not the occupant

of the home). We learned a lot about the history of the tenant's substance use disorder and his

near-death from an overdose a year earlier. One of the neighbors shared that an Augusta-based program, Young People in Recovery (YPR), might be something we could offer

to the young man who had the substance use disorder with opioids.

I called him and began giving him rides to the YPR meetings each week. I attended the meetings with him and learned a lot from the other attendees. The situation became hopeful when my neighbor-friend began engaging with the other members and obtained their contact information. He told me he didn't need rides to the meetings anymore, because the other YPR

members with whom he'd made contact were giving him rides.

I thought things were going well for him, and I didn't check on him regularly. Sadly, the upswing

in his recovery didn't last long. The opioids, his cerebral need for the opioids and his isolation took hold of him. He died of an overdose several months later, much to the heartbreak to his family, friends and neighbors. Naturally, we asked ourselves, "What more could I have done to

help him, connect with him?"

If Augusta had had a RCC when my neighbor-friend was seeking recovery, he might be alive today. The support, the safe place, the camaraderie, the connections and the "one-stop" concept of a RCC might've given him chances in his recovery that a once-a-week meeting at a

church couldn't.

The opposite of addiction is connection. A RCC is such a hub of connection for our brothers and sisters who have substance use disorder. I'm in favor of L.D. 488 and encourage you to pass it.

I am happy to answer any questions that may arise from the content of my testimony. I can be reached at parsusan@gmail.com or (207) 441-4942.

Sincerely,
Susan J. Parks