

Jake Robert

Former member/ current Housing Coordinator

Vermont Foundation of Recovery

I would like to thank the committee for taking the time to listen to me today.

My Name is Jake Robert, I live in Saint Albans, I am a former resident and current Housing Coordinator for Vermont Foundation of Recovery.

Today, I am here in support of Recovery Partners of Vermont, and to advocate for their proposed allocation of funds for certified recovery residences, community-based peer recovery coaching, and recovery residence scholarships.

A little over two years ago I was drinking around one liter of liquor every day. I would drink from the time I woke up until the time I went to bed. I was barely able to keep a job and a place to live, often asking family and friends for money to pay rent. I wasn't able to eat and I was neglecting my health. I was born with a rare congenital heart disease, and I would often choose to spend the last of money on alcohol rather than fill my prescription heart medications.

In February 2022, in a moment of desperation, I was able to accept help. My brother took me to the emergency room, to detox safely. There I was introduced to a local Recovery Coach. The connection I made with this recovery coach guided me through inpatient rehab, my first year of sober living, and is still one of my most trusted supports to this day.

Before I went to treatment, I learned about Vermont Foundation of Recovery. I didn't know anything about VFOR or recovery residences in general, but I knew I needed to try something different, because nothing had worked before. In treatment I found out that I was accepted to the VFOR Saint Albans residence, not knowing that this would change my life.

Getting a scholarship for my first month of membership was a very important part of getting my recovery off to a strong start. Not having to worry about money for the first month allowed me to focus on establishing a routine, attending recovery meetings, and making connections in the recovery community.

Having a safe and substance free space to live with other people in recovery was essential to my success. My recovery residence provided much needed structure and support that was missing from my life for so long. The policies and standards of the residence kept me accountable. These included, going to recovery meetings, meeting with a recovery mentor,

paying dues on time, taking my medications as prescribed and cleaning up after myself just to name a few. Living there made me proud of the things I was doing and the person I was becoming. I learned how to take care of myself and to be there for others.

I lived in a VFOR recovery residence for a year. In that time, I was able to have continuous sobriety, gain meaningful employment, make dozens of connections to the community, and move into permanent housing. Within the local recovery community, I met the woman who is now my wife. I am excited to say we are expecting our first child in May. Everything I had ever hoped for, but didn't think was possible has come true, and it all started that day in treatment when I found out I was accepted to a VFOR recovery residence.

Funding for recovery residences, recovery coaches, and recovery residence scholarships are so important to me. Not only because they changed my life, but now that I am a Housing Coordinator for VFOR, I can see them change others' lives every day.

Thank you for listening.