



February 1, 2024

Testimony to the House Committee on Health Care – Bill 24-0641

Dear Madam Chair

Recovery Coaching within Vermont's Recovery Centers has been a growing and powerful tool in working with guests. We have watched this service grow over the past 14 years. In the beginning we had a Recovery Coach Academy where people in recovery for at least a year who wanted to be a coach would go to train. Subject matters like boundaries, ethical guidelines, self-care, active listening, and developing a recovery plan of action would be discussed. Upon returning to the recovery center newly minted recovery coaches would receive supervision in-house and furthered learnings from staff on community and in-house resources and continued learnings around ethical issues and boundaries.

As the years have passed peer recovery coach supervision has become more formalized in the recovery centers and now to be a certified recovery coach one needs to continue to learn and a certain amount of CEU's are required every two years to keep your certification. This all has helped professionalize the role of the recovery coach. In my former role as the Executive Director of the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County I actually had a 3-year period of recovery required before one could become a Certified Recovery Coach. For me this group of coaches were our elite group of recovery coaches. We had the luxury of having a companion program of peer support workers who needed 1 year of recovery to provide that less intense support. I wanted them to have a solid foundation of recovery before they provided support to others.

So here we are with Bill 24-0641 which would license Peer Recovery Coaches. I think this is a terrific move forward. The state is looking to be able to bill Medicaid for this service and this bill would solidify Peer Recovery Coaching as a legitimate professional service that deserves reimbursement from insurance programs. One area that needs close attention is background checks. I noticed it on page 8. Many of our recovery coaches have a justice involved history. When decisions are made around what constitutes an offence that could prohibit someone from becoming a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, I hope we are involved in that decision.

I'm also attaching the FY 2025 priorities of the Recovery Partners of Vermont for your information. You will note one of the priorities is Peer Recovery Coaching in the Correctional System for inmates pre and post incarceration. The pilot at the Marble Valley Correctional Center in partnership with our Turning Point Center of Rutland has been wildly successful. We would like to take that state-wide. The Department of Corrections fully supports this request. Thank you.