



To: House Committee on Human Services  
From: Andrew Gonyea, Co-Founder and Director of Operations, Vermont Foundation of Recovery  
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024

Subject: Key Information Relating to Landlord-Tenant Language in S.186

As the Co-Founder and Director of Operations for the Vermont Foundation of Recovery, I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of incorporating landlord-tenant law language to support certified recovery residences in Vermont. This legislative action is essential for safeguarding the well-being and success of residents in our state.

1. Evolution of Recovery Residences:

- In 2018, Vermont lacked certified homes, prompting the development of Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences (VTARR). VTARR provides access to recovery residences through established standards, a fair and transparent certification process, community engagement, education, technical assistance, research, and advocacy.

2. Importance of Recovery Residence Safety and Culture:

- Recovery residences foster a distinct culture of structure and accountability, emphasizing transparency, social norms, and integrity to ensure safety and success for residents.

3. Lifeline for Transitioning Individuals:

- Recovery encompasses the process of breaking old habits and cultivating new ones, facilitated through structured participation in weekly meetings and engagement in household responsibilities. If a member fails to adhere to the residence programming, including repeated violations of house policies, disruptive behavior that affects the well-being of other members, or engaging in activities that jeopardize the safety of the community, then they present a real disturbance to the overall structure that fosters new, healthy habits for each individual and may not be ready to live under such structure.

4. Crisis Response and Exit Strategies:

- Our systematic approach prioritizes safety and stability, with individualized safety net plans and emergency accommodations provided for members in crisis situations.  
- Exit strategies involve collaborating with community partners to provide support and resources for individuals leaving the residence, ensuring a smooth transition and continuity of care.

5. Supporting Autonomy and Continuum of Care:

- Members retain autonomy in decision-making, with recovery residences complementing broader support services in the continuum of care.

6. Overall Impact of the Formal Eviction Process on an Individual:

- The formal eviction processes under landlord-tenant law puts a mark on an individual's record, which can be emotionally and financially draining, often resulting in lengthy legal battles, damaged credit scores, and limited access to future housing. In contrast, having members released through member contracts can offer a more amicable and cooperative approach, allowing for smoother transitions, maintaining dignity, and preserving relationships within the recovery community.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the significance of incorporating landlord-tenant law language to support certified recovery residences in Vermont. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Andrew Gonyea