

**Written & Spoken Testimony of Janet Cote for the Health & Welfare Committee
in re: Senate Bill S.219 on Regulation of Sober Houses
Vermont Legislature
28 January 2014**

I have lived in my Waterbury home on East Street for the past 23 years. I am the closest abutting neighbor living next to the 19 East Street sober house that was established on August 1st, 2013. Since that date I have experienced many adverse living conditions and events, specifically:

- on August 1st: being threatened both verbally and with gestures by Andrew Gonyea, leaving me feeling unsafe and frightened
- on August 2nd: following the directions of the State Police, I experienced the stress of installing No Trespass signs and filing for a restraining order
- on August 3rd and repeatedly thereafter: my sleep has been disturbed by late-night yelling and other noise, leaving me feeling constantly tired and my physical health has been impaired, as a consequence; numerous other neighbors have also experienced late-night disturbances, as the attached letter attests
- on August 4th the neighbor next door to me (15 East Street) experienced a robbery, which has left the neighborhood feeling vulnerable to additional crime
- on August 7th my car was vandalized and dented on all 4 sides
- in September I repeatedly found empty beer cans in my backyard (no one at my home drinks), as well as cigarette butts right by my basement windows (no one at my home smokes)
- also in September two dogs from the sober house repeatedly came on to my property (Waterbury Village has a dog-leash law) and when I called the Animal Control Officer, he told me that he would not come to the sober house without the police; the police did accompany the Animal Control Officer shortly thereafter
- on October 11th, after a physical examination, my physician confirmed that I am suffering from insomnia and anxiety due to the changes in the neighborhood
- on October 15th the storm door handle of my home was smashed.
- from August 1st to the present I have suffered from the smell of cigarette smoke, and I have witnessed the accumulation of dozens of bags of garbage. With the arrival of warmer weather, this is likely to cause both smell and vermin.
- For the last 6 months I, and other neighbors living on East Street, have observed a significant increase in traffic and parking on the street, which is another safety concern since part of East Street has no sidewalks. We have also observed cars parking in the intersection of East Street and Clover Lane, creating a traffic hazard.

In the hearings before the Development Review Board, both the Riegels/Garrett and Gonyea assured the audience that the sober home would not impair the quality of life in our community. I, and other neighbors of the sober house, have experienced quite the opposite.

To date, my living next to the sober house at 19 East Street in Waterbury has left me physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically and financially drained. On a daily basis I feel vulnerable and unsafe in my own home.

Janet Cote