



April 11, 2024

Testimony
Senate Health & Welfare Committee – Bill S186

Dear Madam Chair & House Human Services Committee Members

My name is Gary De Carolis, Executive Director, of the 15-member Recovery Partners of Vermont. Our members include all 12 recovery centers, Jenna's Promise, VFOR and VTARR. These programs in total represent 186 Full time employees and 75 part time employees. All staff are people with lived experience or a family member of someone with lived experience. There are 154 certified recovery coaches employed or on contract with our members.

Many of our members' employees have spent time in a recovery residence on their path to recovery. The amendment offered by Representative Tom Stevens is a top priority to ALL our members. Certified recovery residences offer a safe space for individuals in that tender and vulnerable place in their early early recovery. Most, if not all, residents also are frequent if not daily attendees at our recovery centers. Volunteering, going to meetings and getting involved in the recovery centers activities. Together these two anchors to people new to recovery begin to create the wrap around of safe space that is crucial to sustaining their recovery. The temptation to start using again is so in the face of all people new to recovery. It is a minute by minute, hour by hour and day by day devotion to stay in recovery. This is why it is critically important to ensure safety in certified recovery residences. If someone relapses, and we know relapse is part of recovery, it can be life or death for the individual and the residence. The staff at recovery residences do whatever is necessary to make sure that the person who has relapsed has a safe place to go. The \$1 million dollars in opioid settlement funds in the FY25 budget to expand stabilization beds across the state is a critical investment as certified recovery residences grow. Both are critically important and thanks to your work you are addressing both sides of the equation.

As a former executive director of the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County my number one job was to make sure our center was safe. If we could not do that, we were failing our guests. It affords people time to develop the necessary recovery capital so they can eventually go out and make a living, have their own place to live and become productive members of society. The same is true for certified recovery residences. Anything less than safe jeopardizes the fragile nature of someone who is brand new to recovery. The consequences can be devastating. Thank you.

Gary De Carolis, Executive Director
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