



Testimony to Public Hearings on the Governor's Recommended FY 2027 State Budget

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Thank you for hearing my testimony today on behalf of Vermont's peer-recovery centers. My name is Suzie Walker, and I live in Brattleboro. I'm a woman in long-term recovery, and it's my privilege to serve as the Executive Director for the Recovery Partners of Vermont. Our membership organization represents 14 peer recovery recovery centers and recovery residences across the state. We're tremendously grateful for funds to ensure our recovery service organizations can provide lifesaving services to our friends and neighbors.

Funding recovery centers with another \$800,000 in Prevention Funds would preserve current services at a time when recovery centers are facing increased demand. People in or seeking recovery benefit from recovery programs that provide access to services, and importantly, connect them with a community of people with lived experience who guide the way to healing and purpose.

Recovery organizations have seen a significant increase in demand for our services, and we expect this trend to continue as federal actions make it harder for individuals who are struggling with substance use to access resources and services. Recovery organizations are also seeing an increase in the number of visitors who are accessing recovery spaces for more general support as other community partners and local agencies downsize or close. In particular, we have seen an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness who access our space. We do everything we can to support any individual who comes through our doors.

As the former director of the Turning Point of Windham County recovery center, I know the impact peer-recovery support services can have on people and places. One impact we see over and over is that people who once accessed the centers for recovery support and resource connection become trained recovery peers themselves. Their lived experience with substances and with overcoming substance use and related problems provides a skillset and sensibility that no one else can offer. Their experience overcoming painful and seemingly insurmountable problems provides tremendous hope for program participants, and their insights help improve the system they now serve. The recovery system pays it forward in profound ways.

This essential work is why we're asking to fund recovery centers with another \$800,000 in Prevention Funds.

Thank you for your time and support.

Suzie Walker

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