



DATE: February 19, 2025

NAME: Harley LaRocque

ORGANIZATION: Vermont Foundation of Recovery and Recovery Partners of Vermont

LOCATION: St. Albans, VT

I would like to start off by saying thank you to this committee for having me here and for listening. My name is Harley LaRocque. I am a person in long-term recovery and I live in Saint Albans, Vermont. I am a former member, mentor, house coordinator, and currently membership coordinator for Vermont Foundation of Recovery. I am here today to ask the committee to support Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding requests.

In late 2016, I overdosed on purpose in an attempt to take my life and ended up in a weeklong coma. I had damaged my heart and had abnormal brain activity and was on a breathing ventilator. Suddenly, I woke up in the hospital's ICU. While in the hospital, a friend who passed from this disease a couple years ago suggested that I think about recovery housing and I thought it was a great idea.

In early 2017, I went to live at the Oxford House in Burlington, but was not ready to follow rules and was asked to leave my first week at the recovery home. I called a friend for any recovery house suggestions and they suggested that I call Vermont Foundation of Recovery and gave me the number. I didn't know anything about VFOR, but I learned that I knew many of the people who worked for them. I called and did an interview at a coffee shop in Burlington. I was accepted and I started my membership with VFOR's Saint Albans Recovery Home on 2/12/2017. Which is my current recovery date.

While at the recovery home I had to follow rules and requirements that were foreign to me and the way I lived my life at that time. However, I had this inner voice coaching me to just follow the rules. "You will never know if this works if you don't try". To pay for the recovery home for the first month, I had help from the Jobs for Independence grant which gave me enough time to look for and obtain employment which I did at a local restaurant part-time. I also chose to follow a spiritual recovery program as well as live at VFOR. Within a few months, I was regularly paying my membership dues, following the rules of the program, and I was seeing much improvement in my thinking and behaviors and overall outlook on life.

The ability to live around others who were also trying to find their way in this life without substances gave me a sense of belonging and the support I needed to keep improving my thoughts, actions, and behaviors and to keep growing within my recovery. I was gaining the understanding of paying bills, saving for a car, and making a monthly budget for what I spend money on, so I could learn to save money for the future. I learned how to make achievable goals and then take action and do the work that is needed to achieve certain goals. I was learning that I had a lot of fears and that I could push past these fears and thoughts to achieve goals I set for myself.

After one year at VFOR I was the first member to move into the newly renovated Transitional Apartment in Saint Albans. This was the next stage in me becoming self-sufficient and living on my own. I had to pay for one month of membership dues at a time and put the utilities in my name. I had never had a gas bill or any of these utilities in my name before. It felt really good to have finally accomplished this in my life.



I stayed at the Transitional Apartment for 2.5 years and during that time I was hired at Vermont Foundation of Recovery as the House Coordinator at the Saint Albans and Saint Johnsbury locations. I was a member and a staff member at the same time. I tried to mentor the members of the recovery house with the unique perspective of being a member and still do to this day.

In the summer of 2020, it was my time to transition on from VFOR and get my own apartment and no longer be a member of VFOR, which was scary but I was ready for this next chapter of my life. I moved into my own apartment and it felt just like the transitional apartment I had been paying for, but just a little more expensive. The fear of being able to pay bills and save money was no longer a real fear as I had learned these skills while at VFOR and they carried over to my first apartment which I still live at. I was then adopted by a cat named Piper and it is a great honor to have to care for another living being and I am super grateful she chose me.

I also just bought my very first new car and this is something I never thought I would be capable of achieving. I trudged past so many fears, so much negative self-talk about not being good enough or responsible enough or worthy enough to have these things. This disease didn't want me to have many of these things in my 20's and 30's and I agreed that I wasn't worthy. So I never made goals to achieve these things most humans find to be trivial.

I have now worked for VFOR for six and a half years now and have seen many changes to VFOR and recovery housing in general throughout Vermont. I have seen with my own eyes and experienced that there's a lot more support for recovery homes since 2017 when I started my journey into recovery and living at VFOR and it is beautiful to see that we have come so far in this journey to help others.

I am confident in saying that without the help, support, and love shown to me by VFOR and the people that have worked with me or people that work here now I wouldn't be where I am at in life today. For that I am very grateful and proud to work at a place that helped me save my life and that continues to help me grow and allows me to share my experience to try and help others. It is extraordinarily rewarding. I would like to share one of my favorite quotes with you all: "You can only keep what you have by giving it away".

So I ask you kindly to support these organizations who aim to help people like me. Thank you for your time and supporting Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding requests. Have a great day!

Sincerely,

Harley LaRocque
Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR)
On behalf of Recovery Partners of Vermont
Email: Harley@vfor.org | Cell: 802-557-8652