

Victoria Thompson
Person in Recovery
Jenna's Promise
Testimony Re: S.157 to the House Committee on Human Services

My name is Victoria Thompson, I am 32 years old, and I have been sober for 4 months as of yesterday. And I am here to tell you I support S.157, if I could have a moment of your time to tell my story, I can explain why. I have struggled with addiction, for more than half of my life. I started using at the age of 13, and on a regular basis, by the age of 15. As a result from my extensive drug use, I was faced with the many consequences that come along with it. I was arrested for my first drug related charge at the age of 17 in Holyoke MA. With many more to follow. Beginning my long-term relationship with the Vermont legal system.

I come from a loving, supportive family. One that has suffered right along beside me, but fortunately has never given up on me. As a result, I entered another long relationship with treatment facilities, at the age of 18. From then on, it was a revolving door, with just about every treatment facility in the state of Vermont, and being accepted into many rehabilitation programs over the next 14 years. Partnered with my frequent visits with the house of corrections.

In 2021 I was arrested and charged with, sale of narcotics with death resulting. I then went on the run, therefore, I wasn't sentenced until November 2025. This charge stands for a two year sentence minimum, 20 year maximum. With the help, and support from my attorney, Jordana Levine, I applied to Jenna's promise, with the understanding and agreement, that I would not have to serve the full two years incarcerated, and be released to this program. So I was. I originally came to Jenna's October 1, 2025, with high expectations of myself, and of them as well. But I was also very nervous. Fresh out of Jail, fresh into recovery, and very confused with what I wanted in life. The only thing I knew for sure, was that I wanted to live.

So I dove right in, I kept myself busy with every program they offered, I utilized every outlet. I went to every meeting. I was present in therapy, I created friendships with the other women. I felt comfortable with where I was, but still felt that something wasn't right within myself. No matter how much I tried to distract myself. No matter how desperately I wanted to be clean, wanted to be someone my family could be proud of again, be the daughter, sister, they all know so well and missed you so much, I simply wasn't ready, and had returned to use.

Now, when I applied to JP's, they made me aware of the precautions if this were to happen. So I was comfortable coming back, letting them know I relapsed. I knew I wouldn't be judged, scolded, or made to feel ashamed of the truth. And I wasn't. So my relapse safety plan went into effect, not only to keep me safe, but to keep the other women safe as well. I was given many opportunity to stay on course, the staff stayed in contact with me every single day. I knew they were available to me whenever I needed them. I was to come home within 3 to 5 days, recommitting myself to the program, Which I failed to do. It was at this moment. I knew, Jenna's promise was 110% behind me and my recovery. They wanted to help me stay sober just as badly as I wanted to. Immediate action was taken, they set a bed date after bed date for me at treatment. Called every day multiple times. Unfortunately, by then I was using again every day. Back on the street, completely shutting out any support. Two weeks later, I was picked up by HPD after a warrant was put out for my arrest and I was on my way back to a place I very well knew. Not only the facility itself, but the shame, guilt, and worthlessness that comes along with

it. I desperately wanted to come home. Needed to come back. And not a day goes by, that I don't thank this program for never giving up on me, giving me another chance, and accepting me to come back. To try again. I arrived back home at the end of January and started all over, right back at square one. Which was important to me, and crucial for my recovery, because I had no idea where or how to even begin. The love and support I received from staff, allowed me to integrate back into a routine, and felt as if I never left. When I came to JP's for the first time, I wasn't nearly anywhere ready to take my life back. Exiting the program and being accepted back, has allowed me a whole new perspective on my recovery and my life. And with the help from this program, their staff, the pillars that each play an important role, as to how this all works, I can finally have a chance to figure out who I even am. The chance that my addiction robbed me of. Jenna's promise has made it possible for me to get that back. I can assure you with every bit of truth, that I would not be standing in front of you today, if I was never given that second chance. If they didn't fight for me, when I no longer could. If they didn't believe in me when I had so deeply given up on myself. I may be putting in the work, but I owe it to this program for even making that possible.