



**DATE:** February 19, 2025

**NAME:** Hilary Whitaker

**ORGANIZATION:** Vermont Foundation of Recovery and Recovery Partners of Vermont

**LOCATION:** Barre, VT

I would like to start off by thanking the committee for having me today. My Name is Hilary Whitaker, I currently reside in Barre, VT in a Women's Recovery Home, provided by Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR). I am here today to discuss my experience in a certified recovery residence and to ask for the committee to support Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding requests.

I am a big advocate of Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) and everything that it has helped me do in my past, what it's doing presently, and thanks to VFOR my family and I's future. Staff do not just work for VFOR, it is personal. Everyone I have met is passionate about being here and helping people in recovery daily. I have learned and grown a lot, from the principles and policies that have to be upheld to be successful. The acceptance and accountability we need to guide and motivate us to do better. Also, for various members I have met while residing in the VFOR residences I have lived in.

I have been living in VFOR's Barre Recovery Home for the past 10 months. I started out at VFOR's Morrisville Women's Recovery Home and then transferred to Barre about three months ago. I have been in recovery and on Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for 12 years. For Opioid addiction, one of the biggest hurdles I faced when I was on Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) was after my daughter's father committed suicide in front of us in 2016. I was stable on my Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT); however: what I wasn't anticipating and something I swore I would never do because of my mother dying of alcoholism in 2006, was to let alcohol gradually and ever so slowly take control. I truly believed my addictions were under control. Both of my brothers are also deceased from addiction. I had never cared to drink prior except socially. Let alone habitually or excessively. It wasn't all at once, but it never is, is it?

What started as going out after work Friday nights with my friends and colleagues turned into Saturdays, then during nights during the middle of the week. In time, it became a lot more convenient and cheaper to just buy a bottle at my local liquor store and make my drinks at home. It wasn't a problem until it was. Fast forward eight years and many failed attempts to try to get my drinking under control. By changing my drinking habits, stopping for small stints at a time but always returning to a daily basis. I'd become a bitter, angry, volatile person to be around. My hard-working determined spirit was diminishing. My personal relationship suffered, and I was burning bridges. My family suffered. My children suffered all because of my suffering and not knowing where to begin or start again or how I was ever going to beat this thing or get a handle on it once and for all.

My daughter ended up going to live with my father in 2021 because I couldn't responsibly or maturely raise her or help her with her trauma when my trauma was running rampant. I successfully completed Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in 2023 and got off the medication, Suboxone, but I still had to deal with my alcohol abuse disorder. It wasn't until last year on the verge of homelessness and spiritual hopelessness a Capstone worker and I came across Vermont Foundation of Recovery.



I cannot express to you the safety, relief, and optimism I finally felt after so long. When I walked in the door to meet Andrew and to move into VFOR's Recovery Home. I went to my first AA Recovery meeting within 24 hours of moving in. I have been sober for ten months. My relationships with my family and kids have improved astronomically. I am acutely aware of my actions and words. I am proud of myself, I have hope, integrity, and am driven to succeed and stay on my path of recovery because my family's future and generations are depending on it.

I wouldn't have gotten to where I am without Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) and the time I have had to work on myself and the principles and policies VFOR has while living in there Recovery Home. We do recover!

I respectfully urge the committee to support Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding requests to ensure that certified recovery residences can continue providing safe, stable, and supportive housing for individuals in recovery. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Hilary Whitaker

On behalf of Recovery Partners of Vermont

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