



**DATE:** February 11, 2026

**NAME:** Ashley Brown

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

**LOCATION:** Essex Junction, VT

**SUBJECT:** Recovery Day Testimony

Good morning, chairs and members of the committee. My name is Ashley Brown. I am from Essex Junction, Vermont. I am here today to share my lived experience and to ask you to continue supporting recovery residences in Vermont.

On June 11, 2024, I decided it was time to take my life back. I entered treatment at Valley Vista for two weeks, and while I was there, I was offered a bed at Vermont Foundation of Recovery Women's Recovery Home in Essex. I was able to move door to door from treatment directly into recovery housing. That transition was critical for me. Instead of leaving treatment without a plan, I entered a safe, structured environment where recovery was supported every day.

I lived at the VFOR Women's Recovery Home in Essex for seven months. During that time, my life was structured in a way that helped me rebuild from the ground up. I was expected to complete 20 hours of work, volunteering, or education each week. I attended a recovery meeting every day and committed to a home group. I already had a sponsor, and we began meeting weekly to work through the steps. That level of accountability helped me stay focused and grounded in my recovery.

During my time in the home, there were moments that showed me how important clear standards and strong support really are. There was an instance where a member was caught using drugs inside the home. VFOR staff responded quickly and calmly, temporarily removing that person to protect the safety and well-being of everyone living there. What stood out to me most was how the situation was handled. There was open communication with the rest of the house, staff checked in to make sure everyone was okay, and we were supported through what could have been a very destabilizing experience. I felt reassured knowing that the member had an alternative place to go while next steps were being figured out.

There were also times when a member was not able to return to the home because they needed a higher level of care. In other cases, a member was able to come back after a relapse because they took responsibility, showed genuine remorse, and the rest of the house felt safe moving forward together. Being part of those conversations helped me understand that recovery residences are not about punishment. They are about safety, accountability, and meeting people where they are while protecting the recovery of the entire community.

After just a couple of weeks, I started working at a restaurant. I attended noon meetings at Turning Point, where I would meet my sponsor and review the steps I had completed. I also learned about recovery coaching



and connected with a recovery coach. We have met weekly ever since, and those meetings have been a space where I could work through the practical and emotional challenges of rebuilding my life. Whether it was paperwork, planning, or decision making, I always left knowing I had taken another step forward.

As I became more stable, I started giving back by volunteering at Turning Point. Having had a safe place to recover, it felt meaningful to support others who were beginning their own journeys. Through Turning Point, I learned about Hire Ability, which helped me enroll at Vermont State University after six months of sobriety. Together, we mapped out a realistic path that allowed me to maintain employment while building a career.

After seven months in the recovery home, I was able to move into one of VFOR's transitional apartments in Essex. That next step gave me greater independence while keeping me connected to support and accountability. Today, I work at an electrical company where I am excelling and continuing to grow.

The accountability, structure, and support provided by recovery housing made all of this possible. I am truly worlds away from the person I was when I first entered recovery, and I could not have done it without the many people and systems that supported me along the way. When I decided to get sober, I did not know what kind of life I was trying to get back. What I have built since then has exceeded my expectations.

I am here today because recovery residences work. They provide stability, accountability, and community at a critical moment when people are most vulnerable. I respectfully ask you to continue supporting recovery residences in Vermont so more people have the same opportunity I was given.