



**DATE:** February 19, 2025

**NAME:** Candace Gale

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

**LOCATION:** Barre, VT

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for your time today and for your continued support of recovery services across Vermont. My name is Candace Gale, and I am from Barre, Vermont. I serve as the Director of Community Relations for the Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR), a member organization of Recovery Partners of Vermont (RPV). I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the critical need for sustained and increased funding for Vermont's certified recovery residences.

I am here today to respectfully request that the committee include Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding request for certified recovery residences in the budget memo to appropriations. Specifically, RPV is requesting a \$360,000 increase in base funding for certified recovery residences through the state budget. In addition, we are advocating for the following funding through H.218, the FY26 Opioid Abatement Special Funds bill:

- An additional \$300,000 to the \$1.2 million "base" appropriation for recovery residences
- \$325,000 for scholarships to support first-month fees for individuals entering recovery residences

Last year, the General Assembly made a critical investment in recovery housing by allocating both state general funds and Opioid Abatement Special Funds to support the scaling of certified recovery residences. Thanks to this funding, Vermont has brought an additional 40 beds online since July 1, 2024, through the startup of four new residences. However, the demand for recovery housing still far exceeds our current capacity, and Vermont remains behind other New England states in its ability to provide this essential service.

Vermont's certified recovery residences are structured, supportive homes designed to help individuals sustain their recovery. These homes are based on peer-led support, accountability, and community engagement, providing a crucial step between intensive treatment and fully independent living. Recovery residences promote long-term stability, reducing homelessness, criminal justice involvement, and emergency healthcare costs.

In 2024, Vermont's certified recovery residences served 226 individuals, all of whom received peer recovery coaching and were connected to a local recovery center. The average length of stay across the system was six months, and 63% of individuals in recovery homes gained meaningful employment during their stay. Of the 143 people who exited a recovery residence last year, at least 70 transitioned to a stable living environment—though this number is likely underreported due to gaps in tracking data.

One of the most significant challenges for recovery residences is ensuring safe, structured transitions for individuals who experience relapse or need additional support before returning to a recovery residence. When an individual is removed from a recovery home, operators work closely with them to develop a safety net plan, ensuring they can access detox services, emergency shelter, or another level of care. However, Vermont has lacked a dedicated stabilization option for individuals in this situation.



To address this, we strongly support the \$1 million in the Governor's recommended FY26 budget for stabilization beds. These beds will allow individuals to temporarily stabilize in a safe, structured environment, providing a critical bridge to continued recovery while maintaining the safety and integrity of recovery residences. This investment will ensure a more stable continuum of care, reducing disruptions in recovery homes while giving individuals the opportunity to reset and re-engage with their recovery.

While the \$1.2 million in base funding for recovery residences in bill H.218 is a step in the right direction, it does not include the \$325,000 necessary for scholarships that cover first-month fees for individuals who lack financial resources. Many individuals leaving inpatient treatment or the justice system do not have the means to pay for a recovery residence upon entry, and these scholarships ensure that financial hardship is not a barrier to accessing housing. Additionally, we are requesting a \$300,000 increase in base funding from the Opioid Abatement Fund to support the startup of three additional recovery residences in underserved regions. The demand for recovery beds far exceeds the supply, with waiting lists at nearly every residence.

Beyond the profound social and health benefits, recovery residences save Vermont money. According to a recent study by the Fletcher Group, opioid use disorder cost Vermont \$2.42 billion in 2017 alone. Recovery housing is one of the most cost-effective solutions for mitigating these costs by reducing relapses, emergency room visits, and incarceration rates. The study found that the economic value of VTARR-certified recovery residences over 15 years is estimated at \$610 million in avoided healthcare, criminal justice, and productivity losses.

You will hear from individuals with lived experience in a recovery residence today, and they can speak directly to the impact that these programs have had on their ability to rebuild their lives. Vermont has an opportunity to continue scaling its network of recovery residences, ensuring that every individual who is ready to commit to recovery has a safe, structured, and supportive place to do so. By investing in these homes and the full continuum of care, we invest in public health, economic stability, and stronger communities.

I just want to end by tying this request back to S.186 from last year. Recovery residences play an important role in the overall continuum of care, and that role is long term recovery, not treatment. Right now, we simply do not have enough recovery housing beds for everyone leaving treatment. This funding is what will help to scale up this resource, strengthening the continuum of care. Maine and New Hampshire have many more beds and both exempt recovery residences from landlord tenant law, and we have not done this in VT. As a result, operators are less confident to scale than in neighboring states where they are exempt. Being exempt from landlord tenant law gives operators the confidence they need to protect the health and safety of all members in a sober living environment, and we will be back at a future date to further this goal for Vermont's certified residences.

On behalf of Recovery Partners of Vermont, I urge this committee to include Recovery Partners of Vermont's FY26 funding request for certified recovery residences in the budget memo to appropriations

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Candace Gale

Promoting wellness for all who are affected by alcohol or substance use disorders  
Recovery Partners of Vermont | PO Box 3042 | Burlington | VT | 05408 | [www.vtrecoverynetwork.org](http://www.vtrecoverynetwork.org)



Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR)  
On behalf of Recovery Partners of Vermont  
Email: [candace@vfor.org](mailto:candace@vfor.org) | Cell: 201-788-3508