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NAME: Candace Gale

ORGANIZATION: Vermont Foundation of Recovery and Recovery Partners of Vermont

LOCATION: Barre, VT

SUBJECT: Recovery Day Testimony – House General

Good afternoon, Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here, and for your continued support of recovery housing and recovery services in Vermont.

My name is Candace Gale, and I serve as the Director of Community Relations for Vermont Foundation of Recovery, often referred to as VFOR. VFOR is a member organization of Recovery Partners of Vermont, and we work closely with providers, advocates, and people with lived experience across the state to strengthen and expand Vermont's recovery ecosystem.

I want to begin by thanking this committee and the Legislature for your past support of certified recovery residences. That support has helped Vermont move from having very few certified recovery homes just a few years ago to a growing, accountable system that is saving lives, stabilizing individuals, and strengthening communities.

I'll start with a brief snapshot of the current recovery housing landscape in Vermont.

Vermont Foundation of Recovery operates ten certified recovery homes across the state, providing a total of 79 recovery beds. These homes serve men, women, and parents with children, and are located in multiple regions to ensure access where it is most needed.

Statewide, Vermont has approximately 150 recovery residence beds. While that represents meaningful progress, it remains far below the actual need. Certified recovery residences consistently operate at or near full capacity, and waitlists are common.

The Division of Substance Use within the Department of Health has identified recovery housing as a critical component of Vermont's continuum of care and has set a statewide goal of reaching 400 recovery residence beds by 2030. That goal reflects what providers and people with lived experience see every day. Recovery outcomes depend not only on treatment, but on safe, structured housing during early recovery.

VFOR is positioned to help meet that need. We are actively pursuing expansion opportunities in Middlebury and Brattleboro as our next priority communities, based on identified gaps and strong local partnerships. Our ability to scale responsibly, however, depends on policy alignment and sustainable funding.



That brings me to S.157.

S.157 is a landlord-tenant exemption bill that recognizes the unique nature of certified recovery residences and allows them to follow credentialed discharge policies that protect both individual dignity and community safety.

Recovery residences are not treatment facilities. They are peer-based, structured living environments that rely on shared standards, accountability, and community safety to function effectively.

The current application of landlord-tenant law creates real barriers for certified recovery residences. It limits an operator's ability to respond appropriately to relapse, unsafe behavior, or violations of house standards, and can undermine the safety and stability of the entire recovery community.

S.157 provides a narrowly tailored, standards-based solution that aligns with national best practices and allows certified recovery residences to operate as intended.

If Vermont is serious about reaching 400 recovery housing beds by 2030, policy alignment through S.157 is essential. Without it, expansion will remain slow and uncertain in many communities.

In addition to policy alignment, sustainable funding is equally critical.

I am here to clearly and directly ask the Legislature to support the Opioid Settlement Advisory Council's FY27 recommendations related to recovery housing.

Specifically, we are asking you to:

- Support \$1.75 million in operational funding for certified recovery residences, and
- Support \$200,000 in scholarship funding to help individuals access recovery housing.

These funding streams serve distinct but complementary purposes.

Operational funding ensures certified recovery residences can maintain safe staffing levels, meet certification standards, and cover rising costs related to utilities, insurance, maintenance, and compliance.

Scholarship funding addresses one of the most common barriers to entry. Many people leaving treatment or incarceration do not have the financial means to pay upfront housing costs. Scholarships help bridge that gap and ensure recovery housing is accessible based on need, not income.

Together, these investments support a system that is accountable, accessible, and scalable.



In closing, I respectfully ask this committee and the Legislature to support:

- S.157, to ensure policy alignment that allows certified recovery residences to expand responsibly, and
- OSAC's FY27 recommendations of \$1.75 million for recovery residence operations and \$200,000 for recovery housing scholarships.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to recovery in Vermont. I'm happy to answer any questions.