

Good afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Nina Schain, a person in sustained recovery since May 26, 2003. I am here today to express concern about Proposed Senate Bill 666, An Act Concerning Safe Residential Treatment Facilities for Effective Recovery.

Oxford Sober Houses were started years ago with a strict set of principles and standards aimed at benefiting those in early recovery those who were seeking safe, supportive, and affordable house that without I don't know where I would be today. My 8 months in a sober house was an integral part of my early recovery process.

While I was living in this particular sober house- which was steadfast in maintaining and protecting my recovery, we did accept "fraternity" sisters who did receive help from DMHAS. I don't think that if we had to file a list of residents to state officials that we would have been able to open our doors and offer safe housing to the women we did. Because of the stigma that is associated with addiction and or alcoholism anonymity is sacred in early recovery. In early recovery we have to learn how to work through our own shame and guilt as well as trying to deal with societal stigma.

Not all residents in sober housing receive state funds. Why should we have to make available a list of occupants living together helping one another? So often we are not accepted in communities- people don't realize that we get better- Sometimes we need to remain anonymous to be accepted- that's until we build relationships and people see that we are just like them- then we feel safe in disclosing we are in recovery. How many will we loose if they think their name is going to be added to a list of occupancy for all to see. There is absolutely no viable reason for this.

It would be undoing what was so hard to maintain for some, at the very least, and chase those away who desperately need the help. As a person in recovery I implore you to let people in recovery be allowed to sit with you and DMHAS to set standards which will maintain state standards and local zoning ordinances while protecting those who seek the safety and security of sober housing regardless if they receive state funds or if they are self-pay.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on this extremely important issue. Please do not put a statute in place that may well jeopardize access to housing for persons who are striving to recover their lives and become productive members of society. Please consider working with DMHAS and the recovery community to accommodate community needs.