

Good afternoon, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am Cheryle Pacapelli a person in sustained recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction since June 28, 1989. This means that I have been alcohol and drug free since that time. I am the Director of Operations at CT Community for Addiction Recovery and a Recovery House owner since May 2002. I am here today to tell my story as it relates to Recovery Housing.

In 2002 I bought my first recovery house as a way to try to help others achieve what I have gained. Over the years I have seen men and women turn their lives around and become productive members of society. Where they once were burdens on our system, they became contributing citizens. Because of recovery, they began voting, working, paying taxes, and helping others to achieve long-term recovery. Living in a recovery house provides a safe environment for people to begin new lives in recovery. This environment serves as their family and this support from their peers has proven to be an invaluable experience for many.

One such story that I tell often is that of a man who came to my Recovery House in October 2002 and had been living outdoors on Park Street in Hartford for eight years. After completing treatment he came to Stepping Stone House, where his peers helped him the same way they had been helped, they shared food and clothing, they helped him fill out job applications. He got a job at a local Walmart, was employee of the month and after two years was able to transfer to Florida to be closer to his family. Do you think he would have had that chance if he went back to Park Street?

As result of owning my Recovery House I was introduced to CT Community for Addiction Recovery. At the time they were holding focus groups with Recovery House owners about, what the clients needs were, what could help their clients achieve long-term recovery. I was eventually hired as the Director of the Recovery Housing Project.

CCAR has over 7 years experience as advocates for the recovering community in Connecticut, we realized helping people find a good environment to heal was a great need. We all new of Recovery Houses in our own Community so we began to compile a Recovery Housing database to help people in need find a good recovery house.

The Recovery Housing Coalition of CT was established in October 2004 at a time when access to affordable, quality recovery options has been significantly diminished, the Recovery House movement is a bright light on the horizon. Across the state individuals in recovery have quietly created a number of dignified, safe recovery environments where people, in early recovery as well as those who have a history of recovery, are given the time needed to develop the tools necessary to embark on a life of recovery, but also positively impact the quality of that recovery. The Recovery Housing Coalition meets monthly, we have established minimum standards for operating a Recovery house, we provide technical assistance to new and current owners of Recovery Houses and are a forum for Recovery Housing issues.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on this extremely important issue. Please do not put in place a statute 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.