

Good Morning, Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Human Services committee. I am here today to express concerns about **H.B. 5243 An Act Concerning Sober Homes**.

In 2005, I completed an inpatient treatment program. That program suggested that my next level of care be a halfway house. Remarkably, I followed the suggestion. The halfway house suggested that I go to a sober house. The sober house that I chose to go to was an Oxford House in the town of Manchester. During the time that I was at the Oxford House, I learned how to live independently from my parents, learned how to pay bills, and because of the "democratic" nature of the house, really learned a lot about taking responsibility and interacting with other people. Had I not had the experience of living in an Oxford House, I highly doubt that I would be in the position that I am today of being a Telephone Recovery Support Manager at the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery.

If this bill were to pass, thousands of individuals in the state would not be able to go to an Oxford House because there is really no "manager" at these houses, they are run by the residents themselves. Oxford Houses are an international model, and have worked for decades. In my opinion, it seems a shame to restrict access to this desperately needed sober housing in the state of Connecticut. If an individual is to recover, they are destined to become a contributing, tax-paying member of society, rather than a burden to society by being incarcerated or using taxpayer dollars in a treatment program. Sober Houses provide individuals with a much better chance to achieve sustained recovery.

Every day, both in my job and professionally, I see success stories from sober houses. A good friend of mine manages sober houses, and I have worked with some of the women who reside at the houses. It is absolutely amazing to see the growth that these women go through while being a resident of the sober houses. One sees their confidence building, their relationships getting healthier and stronger, and they also develop an incredible network of women. I believe that the networking component is really the quintessential component of the sober house, in that even after they leave the sober house, they still have some numbers to call, and still feel connected, and not alone, one of the most devastating symptoms of addiction.

Please do not put in place a statute that may well jeopardize access to housing for persons striving to recover their lives and become productive members of society. Please consider working with DMHAS, the Recovery Housing Coalition of CT and the recovery community to accommodate community needs. Thank you.