



February 29, 2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Jennifer Tuerke and I am a person in long term recovery and the Executive Director of Voices of Hope, a Recovery Community Organization (RCO) that serves Cecil and Harford Counties.

I am asking you to support SB 751 – doing so, you will be investing in Recovery from opioid use disorder throughout Maryland. After crisis and treatment, Recovery is what happens with us and our families in our communities. This bill invests directly into Recovery from addiction. Recovery Community Organizations are nonprofit groups that have been formed by people in recovery, parents and loved ones of those who have died from overdose and addiction. RCOs include such great organizations such as Addiction Connections Resource (ACR), Rage Against Addiction, Charm City Care Connection, James Place, Fort Recovery, etc. We fill the gaps in services in our local communities, especially needed in rural communities. Services include distributing Narcan, providing treatment connection, assisting with recovery planning after treatment, providing recovery housing, increasing access to vocational training and employment, offering family reunification supports, and comforting the grieving after an overdose death.

For example, in Cecil County, where we have no detox or inpatient treatment programs for those with Medicaid, we transport individuals to the closest location, 45 minutes away or more, when they are ready, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – something no state agency or treatment center can do. RCO's work with health departments, justice systems and local governments to address needs so people have access to treatment but also are supported to overcome barriers to long term recovery.

Recovery supports are a smart investment because it moves us away from the costly acute care models of only crisis and treatment over and over again. This bill will provide RESTITUTION, or setting things right, for the opioid crisis caused in part by the pharmaceutical companies by funding directly into the local communities affected. We are asking for a percentage of total opioid restitution dollars. Currently, substance use RCO's have no dedicated funding stream statewide and we hustle every year to stay in operation, even in this overdose death crisis. Please support recovery in our communities, please support SB 751.

Thank you so much,

Jennifer A. Tuerke, Executive Director