

CG_MGA Testimony 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Cortney Golden

Position: UNF

February 26, 2024

SB866 - Health - Small Halfway Houses and Small Private Group Homes - County Zoning
Senate Finance Committee

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I write to you today as a grateful recovering addict and productive member of society. My life has transformed from a person struggling in the grips of active addiction to a life of recovery with meaning and purpose. The first 18 months of my recovery were found in a recovery house, which introduced me to the foundation of my recovery. I was able to focus on maintaining abstinence from drugs and alcohol in a safe, stable, drug-free environment. This residence allowed me an opportunity of growth while providing an increased level of structure, accountability, and guidance I needed to integrate successfully back into society.

The day I moved into the recovery house, I had just completed a 28-day treatment program, I didn't have a place to call home, I was financially insecure, broken, hopeless and without a sense of direction or purpose. This house provided me with my first perception of stability as it offered me an affordable, structured, recovery-based place to call home while learning to balance life, responsibilities and successfully reintegrating back into society. I was able to gain employment and access local resources without worrying about means of transportation as everything was within walking distance. I was strongly encouraged to participate in a 12-step fellowship while receiving the support I needed to further promote my recovery. This is where I found hope, purpose, and the desire to live again. I built relationships with women, who shared similar struggles and where we encouraged each other's success, growth, and perseverance. These were the steppingstones I needed to transition to independent living. Today, I am able to maintain full-time employment, financial stability, find balance in life, parenthood and additional responsibilities while maintaining the key components that keep my recovery ongoing.

I strongly believe Senate Bill 866 will greatly impact the recovery community and unfortunately be truly detrimental to those trying to find stability and structure, especially for those in early recovery. I feel as though this would be an ultimate disservice to the community. It will create an increased number of obstacles for those trying to recover and will limit the availability of the residences that provide the support many people, like myself, so desperately need.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 866. The thought of segregating those in recovery is extremely unsettling. Countless lives have been positively impacted by the support and stability that these recovery residences provide. I encourage you to find unity within our communities and let our people recover.

Sincerely,

Cortney Golden
Carroll County, MD.

Letter to the senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Edward Frey

Position: UNF

March 1, 2024

SB866 – Health – Small Halfway houses and Small Private Group Homes – County Zoning
Senate Finance Committee

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I write to you today as a grateful recovering addict and productive member of society. I would like to share a little bit about my experience with utilizing a recovery home as a tool to help guide me in my new way of life. For the better half of two decades, I struggled with the grips of addiction and all the turmoil that comes with it. I had my own home, a wife and children, and a Career during these times. I was in and out of treatment facilities multiple times throughout my life, but just could not seem to sustain a clean drug free life. It was not till I finally made the leap of utilizing a recovery house to help me put these tools I have learned into use. Being in a stable environment with people who have similar issues proved to be just what I needed to help me get distance between myself and the reasons I used substances to deal with everyday life. I personally think without places such as these homes I would never learn how to be a productive member of society.

If this bill passes, I believe the control of these necessary places will fall into the hands of people or policies that do not consider that every life matters, and that includes those recovering from addiction and alcoholism. It is critical to be able to be integrated within the community and have these places available because the war on drugs is not stopping anytime soon and our young people within our community are suffering at an alarming rate.

I genuinely believe Senate Bill 866 will poorly impact people's ability to recover in a safe and structured environment that has proven to be life altering in a positive manner. It will only further stimulate the stigma that has been put on our disease of addiction. And continue to increase the gap between recovering addicts and society as we see it.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 866. The thought of segregating those seeking recovery from the general population ensures that we are not a united community and can care less about those who so clearly deserve the same rights and chance of a peaceful and fruitful life.

Sincerely,

Edward Frey Jr.

Carrol County, MD.

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Uploaded by: Helen McCall

Position: UNF

SB866 - Health - Small Halfway Houses and Small Private Group Homes - County Zoning
Senate Finance Committee

March 8, 2024

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I'd like to start by giving a little bit of my background. I am a recovering addict in Westminster, Carroll County, Maryland. On May 2nd I will have 17 years of sobriety, and total complete abstinence of all substances, including alcohol. If it were not for recovery residences, sober homes, and/or group homes, I would not be the successful business woman, mother, friend, and daughter I am today. Not only did a recovery residence give me the ability to feel human again, it gave me stability... the stability I needed to gain employment, to get my daughter back and have a life worth living. I am also a former State employee of the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) under Dr. David Lever for almost 11 years. I worked under Dr. Lever as his Executive Associate, and have an understanding of local jurisdiction authority, which is what raises my concern.

Senate Bill 866 would pose a significant threat to the very essence of what makes recovery possible for countless individuals like myself. Currently, these homes are protected by the Fair Housing Act, Maryland Civil Rights Laws, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Federal Fair Housing Act as amended in 1988, prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of "handicap", ("or Disability"). Due to the Rehabilitation Act, "disabled" now includes "individuals who have a record of drug use or addiction". Putting this bill into effect would become a potential form of segregation, by giving local governments the power to exclude housing for these individuals through the exercise of zoning authority, and dividing where recovering addicts are to live and the process in which they get to find a home. We are humans and we have the right to recover in a livable community just like anyone else.

The number of overdoses in 2019 in Carroll County was 1063. The number of overdoses in 2023 was 581. That is nearly half the amount in less than 4 years! During this timeframe there have been several recovery residences that have opened in Westminster specifically, and these homes have had a direct impact on saving lives! Recovery Residences, sober homes, and group homes are a huge form of **Harm Reduction**. Harm Reduction not only helps the suffering addict, but the communities and families at large. Where will addicts go if these homes don't exist or are so very few and far between? The homeless population will only increase, and lives will be lost, families continued to be torn apart, children continuing to lose their parents, and vice versa. These homes are where people can live safely, have a structured life, still feel a part of a community, and become a productive member of society. Restricting the operation of recovery residences could exacerbate housing shortages for vulnerable populations, making it increasingly difficult for those in recovery to find stable, supportive living environments. This is not just a matter of zoning; it's a matter of public health and community well-being.

I implore you to consider the lifeline that these facilities represent for those in recovery. The structured support, sense of community, and accessibility to resources they provide are irreplaceable. Any legislation that threatens the existence or efficacy of such places, risks undoing the progress many have fought hard to achieve.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 866. The lives of countless Marylanders, including my own, have been profoundly changed for the better by the support and sanctuary provided by recovery residences. Let's protect and preserve these vital resources for those who are yet to embark on their journey to recovery, as well as those who have already started this journey.

Thank you for considering my perspective and for your commitment to the well-being of our communities.

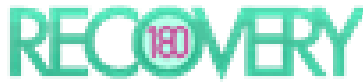
Sincerely,

Helen McCall
Westminster MD (Carroll County)

SB866.pdf

Uploaded by: John Kotz

Position: UNF



March 8, 2024

SB866 - Health - Small Halfway Houses and Small Private Group Homes - County Zoning
Senate Finance Committee

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Recovery180 is a low-intensity residential treatment program that provides substance abuse treatment in a structured sober living environment. We have multiple locations throughout Maryland which include Baltimore City, Carroll County, and Eastern Shore. The program includes six months of housing and clinical services for clients as part of a comprehensive approach to addiction treatment. Clients are supported as they gain skills to improve their physical, mental, emotional, and financial health, with the goal of becoming self-sufficient and independent. As clients complete our programs and take the next step in their recovery, halfway houses and sober living houses are integral in the continuum of care and sobriety.

Maryland's current zoning laws, compliant with the Fair Housing Act and ADA, recognize small halfway houses and group homes as single-family dwellings, crucial for seamless integration into communities. These homes are sanctuaries for those fighting substance abuse, offering them the dignity of recovery within the community's fabric.

Senate Bill 866 threatens this delicate balance, posing risks that are too grave to overlook:

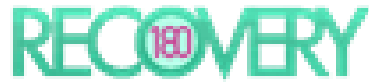
Regulatory Hurdles: Changing zoning laws may inadvertently close facilities that have seamlessly operated in harmony with residential areas, stripping away the chance for many to seek recovery.

Reduced Accessibility: Relocating these homes to less accessible areas could sever vital connections to employment and community services, disrupting the hard-fought progress of residents.

Community Resistance: The bill may invite unwarranted resistance, stigmatizing residents and igniting legal conflicts that further alienate vulnerable groups.

Financial Burden: New zoning laws could impose financial hardships on these facilities, which already operate on limited budgets, diverting funds from critical recovery services.

Housing Shortages: The bill could exacerbate housing challenges, leaving those in recovery with even fewer or no options for safe, supportive living environments.



In conclusion, the passage of Senate Bill 866 would undermine the integrity of recovery homes and the well-being of their residents. We implore you to stand against this bill. Protect the rights and futures of Maryland's recovering community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dr. John Kotz
Director of Operations
Recovery180
1100 Business Parkway South
Westminster, MD 21157