

Greetings Committee Members,

I want to thank you for your support for House Bill 612. I was instrumental in the first training class for recovery support peer specialists within the DOC. This class took place in 2016 at Eastern Correctional Institution. The Behavioral Health Administration was kind enough to fund the trainers who trained 13 incarcerated individuals. Since that time, subsequent trainings in the state prisons have relied on grant funding, which is never guaranteed. I love this bill as it serves to incorporate this CPRS program as part of the vocational training available in Maryland prisons. I guess you could say it cements its existence and gives it perpetuity.

Peer recovery specialists serve to assist others who struggle with some of the same issues that they themselves have struggled with in the past. It is because of this lived experience that they can often reach those that don't or won't engage in traditional therapy. At ECI we set up a recovery tier and our trained peer recovery specialists lived on that tier. It was uplifting to see II's benefit from the supports they received in this program. Even today, 10 years later, I still hear from men who tell me that this program was a factor in them remaining well today.

Jobs for peer recovery specialists are always available in the community and many trained in prison have found satisfying positions as CPRS in the community upon release. This bill insures that this training remains in our prisons and serves a two-fold impact. Training CPRS to be present for others during incarceration as well as available for employment upon release is a win-win. I'm happy to answer any questions this testimony may raise and can be contacted by phone or email.

Sincerely,

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