

Testimony for House Bill 0612

February 17, 2026

To: Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Dear Delegates Pasteur, Coley, Mireku-North, Phillips, Young and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Griffin, and I am writing today to express my strong support for House Bill 0612, which seeks to allocate annual funding to support a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist training program in state prisons. As someone who has personally benefited from peer recovery specialist training provided through “Behind the Walls” training programs, I can attest to the transformative impact this program has on individuals and the broader prison population.

The peer recovery specialist training equipped me with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to not only address my own challenges but also to support others in their recovery journeys. Through this program, I learned how to foster meaningful connections, provide guidance, and empower others to make positive changes in their lives. The training emphasized empathy, active listening, and practical strategies for navigating recovery, which have been invaluable in my personal growth and in helping others.

The benefits of peer recovery specialist training extend far beyond individual participants. By empowering incarcerated individuals to become peer recovery specialists, the program creates a ripple effect within the prison community. Those who complete the training can serve as mentors and role models, fostering a culture of support, accountability, and hope. This not only helps individuals in recovery but also contributes to a safer and more positive environment within the prison system. I personally witnessed this effect by virtue of the work I did as a peer behind the walls. My housing unit was safer, had less “violence” and “use of force” reports attributed to it, and was found to be easier to manage by the correctional staff.

Moreover, the skills and certifications gained through peer recovery specialist training prepare individuals for meaningful employment upon reentry into society. By investing in this program, the state is not only addressing the immediate needs of the prison population but also reducing recidivism and promoting long-term success for those reentering their communities. I was released from custody in October 2024, and currently I work for an organization where I can use my skills as a peer to make a truly positive impact

on society by helping other returning citizens develop reentry plans and reintegrate into society peacefully.

I urge you to support House Bill 0612 and ensure that funding is allocated annually to sustain and expand the peer recovery specialist training program. This investment in peer recovery specialists is an investment in the well-being of individuals, the improvement of our prison system, and the betterment of our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John J Griffin
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