

Bill # HB0448

Bill Title: Health Facilities – Certified Recovery Residences
Unannounced Inspections

Committee: Health

Date: February 11th 2026

Position: In Favor with Amendments

My name is Debbie Santini and I am in support of HB0448 Certified Recovery Residences – Unannounced Inspections – With amendments.

HB0448 states that it would require the Maryland Department of Health to conduct 2 on-site unannounced inspections per year on **certified** recovery houses. While this bill is a step in the right direction and opens a window for greater conversation on this subject, it sets an extremely low bar for oversight in places where individuals lives are literally on the line.

I lost my beautiful son Jesse Byrd in a very bad “recovery” house – Stella House, right here in Annapolis on February 16th 2022. He died of fentanyl poisoning only 5 days after entering Stella. There was no adequate investigation by the Annapolis City Police Department’s detective Larry DeLeonibus. There were 10 people staying at Stella House when my son died. Mr. DeLeonibus only interviewed 4. The owner of Stella house, Yiannes Kacoyianni, has never been held accountable. Sadly, my son’s story is not an isolated death in the state of Maryland in a recovery house.

To request that only 2 unannounced inspections per year be required by the state is not sufficient. It’s very disheartening to families like mine who have lost a child in what was supposed to be a supportive living environment. **The very definition of a recovery house is to provide a safe drug and alcohol free environment in which to live.**

When recovery residences fail to meet standards, there must be real consequences. Certification should be revoked when warranted and owners who operate unsafe recovery houses **MUST** be held accountable. Allowing bad actors to continue to operate while people die is unacceptable. They are literally risking the lives of vulnerable adults.

I urge this committee to strengthen HB448 by requiring at least 4 unannounced inspections a year, to be conducted quarterly. Inspections should also occur in the late evenings when noncompliant, illegal and unethical activity is most likely to happen.

I am thankful for the delegates on this bill and for the support that I have received from the recovery community, but we as a state can do much better than this. It really is a matter of life and death.

Respectfully,

Debra Santini
Lost Voices of Fentanyl
PO Box 44
Woodbine, MD 21797