



**Maryland Alliance for  
Sensible Drug Policy**  
LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall  
Chair, Health Committee  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB448 - Health Facilities - Certified Recovery Residences - Unannounced  
Inspections - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in **strong support** of HB448 on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy, an advocacy group led by people with lived or living experience with substance use.

Recovery housing can be a critical bridge between treatment and stability. I have also seen situations in some homes that were unsafe, degrading, or simply unjust. HB448 is a good step toward stronger accountability by increasing the frequency of unannounced inspections.

**My lived experience: why recovery housing matters**

In the fall of 2014, I was homeless in Baltimore City, living under the Jones Falls Expressway (JFX). I was unemployed, honestly unemployable, and I had bench warrants in two different jurisdictions. Most days, I panhandled to buy food, alcohol, and other drugs. I felt trapped, and I couldn't see a way out.

Then I got lucky. I received a scholarship to attend a quality evidence-based treatment program. But even in treatment, I was scared, because I knew what was waiting for me when I got out: a tent under a highway. And if I went back there, I knew what would happen next.

Then I got lucky again. A nonprofit paid for my first month in a recovery house when treatment ended. It wasn't a huge amount of money, but it gave me a stable landing pad long enough to start rebuilding. I got connected to recovery supports and quickly found a job. At the end of that first month, I had no problem paying my rent at the recovery house. Within six months, I was in my own apartment.

Today, I have a home, a family, and a career that allows me to give back to my community. And I'm happy to report that I have not stepped foot in a courtroom in over a decade. I do not say that for inspiration points. I say it because **my story is a very real example of how recovery housing functions as a bridge between treatment and stability**. Without that bridge, my story could have gone in a very different direction.

## Problems I have witnessed: why oversight matters

However, not all my experiences with recovery residences have been positive. Over the years, I have lived in multiple recovery houses, and I have seen situations that were unsafe, degrading, or simply unjust.

- **Arbitrary discharge:** I've seen residents discharged for reasons unrelated to safety or recovery. In one instance, a person was kicked out at 9:00 p.m. on a Sunday night simply because other residents thought he was a "jerk," which is not an appropriate reason for making someone homeless.
- **Theft:** I've seen discharges handled in ways that strip people of basic dignity and property, including being given 15 minutes and a trash bag to pack, followed by other residents picking through what was left behind despite policies requiring the house to store their remaining belongings safely for 30 days.
- **Unsafe discharges:** I've seen residents who experienced a brief return to use told to leave immediately, sometimes in the middle of the night, with no referrals (to a higher level of care, another recovery residence, or even a shelter), leaving them suddenly homeless at a moment of heightened overdose risk.
- **Discrimination and harassment:** I've seen discriminatory and abusive behavior, including house managers using racist and homophobic slurs and bragging that they had run off every black or gay resident who had been placed in their house.

To be clear, HB448 will not solve these problems on its own. But it is a step in the right direction. More frequent unannounced inspections give residents more chances to report concerns while they are still living in the home and give the State more visibility into patterns residents cannot fix on their own. Oversight will not replace the need for broader reforms, but it can strengthen accountability and transparency in settings that are too often hidden from view. It can also reinforce basic protections, like making it more likely that houses will clearly post residents' rights and a phone number residents can call to report abuse.

## Request

For these reasons, we respectfully ask the Committee to issue a **Favorable Report** on HB448.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas Higdon  
Executive Director  
Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy