Recovery Partners
of Vermont

Testimony to the Joint Session of the House Human Services Committee and the Senate Health & Welfare Committee

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Thank you for hearing my testimony today on behalf of Vermont's peer-recovery system. As a woman in long-term recovery, it's especially meaningful to be speaking with you on Recovery Day as we celebrate the many ways Vermont's systems improve the lives of our friends and neighbors and make our communities more vital.

My name is Suzie Walker, and I am the Executive Director of the Recovery Partners of Vermont, an organization that represents 14 peer recovery organizations across the state, organizations that include recovery centers and recovery residences. It's a privilege to partner with the Vermont Association of Mental Health and Addiction Recovery to celebrate Recovery Day 2026 and advocate for funding to continue these life-saving services.

Today, you'll be hearing testimonies representing the full scope of recovery programming in our state. That includes RPV's recovery centers and recovery residences, as well as our treatment provider partners. While treatment facilities are NOT part of RPV, they are integral to the work of recovery organizations and the continuum of care. Recovery organizations connect with various systems, including not only treatment facilities, but also correctional facilities, emergency departments, DCF, schools, and more. We play a unique role in our integrated system.

Recovery Partners of Vermont is asking for your support of our FY27 Budget requests to help support local recovery services:

1. First, we are asking the Legislature to please renew the $800,000 Recovery Centers received in Prevention Funds in FY26. This renewal would level fund recovery centers and preserve current services at a time when recovery centers are facing increased demand.
2. Recovery Centers are also requesting your support for the Vermont Department of Health's recommendation to appropriate $1,250,000 in FY27 Opioid Abatement Funds to continue the successful peer recovery coaching program within our correctional facilities in your budget memo to Appropriations.
3. Vermont's Certified Recovery Residences are asking the Legislature to support these Opioid Abatement appropriations for FY27:
    a. $1,750,000 for ongoing operational support for a growing number of certified residences.
    b. $250,000 to provide scholarships to cover first month fees for individuals entering a recovery residence

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Certified recovery residences are currently working to scale this resource across Vermont, so that every individual who is recovering from addiction has the opportunity to start their lifelong road to recovery in a homelike setting with peer support, a safe environment, and assistance with support services and community resources in a substance-free environment. Recovery Residences are in a time of rapid expansion in Vermont, which is why operational and startup costs are needed each year.

Finally, but importantly, we'll be speaking about S.157:

Language in Sec. 2(b)(1)(C) effectively ensures the safety of all residents when an individual relapses or engages in behaviors that jeopardize the recovery and well-being of others in the residence.

- While some residences do have stabilization beds available, **Vermont's recovery residences do not provide clinical treatment services,** and any individual who relapses needs a safe space with clinical services.
- We appreciate the efforts across Vermont **to increase access to treatment and stabilization beds.** This helps to ensure that individuals have a safe place to go if they are threatening the health and safety of other residents.
- The application of **Vermont's landlord-tenant law** to recovery residences has been a barrier to scaling this resource in Vermont. This bill makes permanent a legislative solution that has proven to be effective.

You'll hear from people with lived experience who have benefitted from these programs and how this funding and this bill will improve access and efficacy.

Thank you for your time and support.

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