

Time 5:35

Thank you committee members, Ms/Mr. chairperson:

My name is Tim Schilling. I am the Executive Director for Wings Support & Recovery in Union County. We are an organization committed to providing long-term recovery supports for those in our community seeking to live free from the chains of their old lives. In fact, our mission reflects the hope that by improving the lives of those in recovery, we improve the lives of families, friends, co-workers and the community at-large.

At Wings Support and Recovery, every member of my staff is a person living a life in recovery. The composition of our board also reflects a commitment to a recovery lifestyle; 9 of 12 members living in long-term recovery. We are a place for second, third and fourth chances and we are a place where, regardless of today's problems, there is always hope of a better tomorrow for both staff and clients. Our programs do not define a limited length of time where people receive support because we know that people in recovery must always have access to support whenever needed or wanted. Sharing your experiences with someone with similar life experiences, getting support from experiential and psychoeducational groups, access and continued support from vocational program, housing support, and a safe place to be with others in community are some of the on-going supports we have available at no cost for anyone who needs them.

My current position with Wings Support & Recovery is, not coincidentally, a result of my own recovery journey. I am a person living in long-term recovery 10 years removed from the place where I could no longer continue with the brokenness of my life. I was broken financially, so far in debt from financing my addiction I was losing everything. I was broken psychologically, so depressed and isolated that ending my life was a viable option. I was broken emotionally, unable to envision any life beyond or without my

addiction. I was broken physically, a life-flight, intensive care for 10 days, organs shutdown all as a consequence of my addiction. I was broken spiritually, no purpose, no values, faithless, hopeless.

From that time until now, miraculous events have taken place in my life and most of these moments stem from the support I have received through the years; and, in fact, that I still need today. While there are many influential factors in my recovery, most certainly, much of my growth has been because of available long-term recovery support from my community, my family and friends.

Because of these supports, my life has been restored. I received an opportunity to become useful. Life didn't magically get better overnight, it took time and patience. Gradually, though, even as I questioned the seeming futility of my recovery, I was encouraged and sustained by others. At first, I was unable to work. I was told to volunteer, so I did. Soon I became employable again. There I was given some responsibility and then challenged to become more than I thought possible. I began to pursue professional credentials as a counselor. I was encouraged to return to college after 32 years. I developed a passion for helping others and I came to feel I had a purpose and a talent I could share. So at 56, I completed a Master's Degree in Social Work, I am a Licensed Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor and I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker. I have discovered I am therapist with a passion for working with people in recovery from substance use disorders, mental illness and trauma. Today, I contribute to society. I pay taxes. I can save for retirement. I am a life-long learner. I have time to help others as others have helped me. I have a relationship with a beautiful woman whom I am able to love and receive lovesomething not possible in my dark past. I have been taken off the scrapheap of life and restored. Largely because people were there when I needed them.

My successes are repeatable. They can be duplicated by anyone entering a life in recovery that has access to the recovery resources I have had and continue to have. These are not wasted resources nor are they

wasted lives. Lives can be resurrected. People can be made whole, families restored, children reunited and dreams rekindled and realities achieved beyond imagination.

In closing, I want to thank you for your commitment to increase the financial support for the critical services needed for those in recovery. I want to thank the Governor for his support for our mission and I want to express our support for the Governor's budget as proposed. It is a significant step toward fully funding recovery services. Thank you again.