

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Tyia Patchen. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you my testimony on how Harbor Light and Transitional Control has impacted my life upon release from prison.

In 2014 I was sentenced to 6 years in prison. The last 6 months of my sentence, I was to go to a halfway house. I went to the Harbor Light in Cleveland, Ohio.

Upon release, I knew I was going to face some challenges because I was going to be living in a city that I was not familiar with. I was essentially starting from scratch. I knew the basics of what I needed to do. I needed to find employment, save money, and find a place to live. But I did not know the necessary steps to do to get those basic needs met. I was very overwhelmed when faced with these obstacles.

I am forever grateful for Harbor Light because of the opportunities this place offered me. Harbor Light was a cushion for me to ease my way back into society. I was incarcerated for a long time and a lot of things changed in those 5 ½ years. While I was in Harbor Light, I was able to take advantage of their workforce development program. They taught me how to write a cover letter and resume. They helped me navigate indeed to find employment. Because of this, I was able to find a job. My next steps were to save money to get my license, a car and find a place to live. I knew finding housing was going to be a challenge because of my conviction. It took me almost a year to find someone that would rent to me. If it were not for Harbor Light and their extended stay program, I would have been homeless and on the streets.

The Programs that Harbor Light had in place for me upon release set me up for success. I was able to find employment. I am currently the Community Impact manager and Customer service Supervisor for a Non-Profit Organization that helps people in the community. I get to give back to my community today which is such a blessing in my life. I partner with high profile organizations to ensure that we are bridging the digital divide within low-income communities. I have also been able to establish my own business within the beauty industry which I am very proud of myself for. I am also a homeowner which I never thought I would be. I am living the dream I had always envisioned for myself. I have a wonderful family that supports me today. I am sober, successful, happy, and grateful.

I will forever be grateful for the opportunities that Harbor Light was able to offer me. If I was to have been released from prison, without the halfway house to help me reacclimate myself back into society, I would not have had the success I have had. I can guarantee that. I would not have had the luxury of getting assistance in finding employment or saving my money to pay off fines so I can obtain my license. I would not have had a place to rest my head while looking for a place to live. I would have been homeless and literally on the streets. I do not want to think of the outcome of my life if it were not for the support I had before release.

I believe in order to have more success stories from people returning back to society, there needs to be some sort of halfway house or organization that will ensure that these people are going to have an opportunity at success. According to the World population review, the United States has some of the highest recidivism rates in the world. In Ohio, the recidivism rate is at 20.8% according to the Ohio

Department of Rehabilitation and Correction¹. Although this rate is lower than it has been in the past, it can be even lower with more programs set in place for success.

¹ ODRC. (2021). *Recidivism Report*. <https://drc.ohio.gov/Portals/0/2021%20Final%20Report.pdf>