

Ohio House of Representatives Community Revitalization Committee

Melissa Wielkiewicz

Person Recovering from Substance Use Disorder

May 1, 2025

Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, members of the House Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 58. My name is Melissa Wielkiewicz and I am a person in recovery from substance use disorder.

I am submitting testimony opposing House Bill 58 as a person in recovery who had the opportunity to take advantage of living at Woodrow, a certified recovery house, for approximately two years. I firmly believe that having a safe, structured and drug free environment for me to live at during my early recovery gave me the foundation that I needed. It has led to my sustained recovery since leaving the program. Recovery housing is a valuable resource in our community. The benefits are innumerable but I would like to share a few with you now.

Because of the variety of recovery housing options available to me in my early recovery I was able to find the living environment that was the best fit for me. As a resident of Ohio recovery housing, I was able to focus on completing treatment for substance use disorder, continued physical and mental health care, and graduating from drug court, which when completed the judge dismissed the charges against me.

Through the weekly, bi-weekly and eventually monthly goal plans that we are required to due while living in recovery housing, I am able to attain many goals that at one point I would have thought impossible. The house manager helped me to break these larger goals down into smaller goals that were realistic, attainable with an end date that was timely and reasonable. As a resident I also completed wellness wheels which helped me to visualize how much energy I was putting towards the different areas of my life; for example, work, continued learning, spirituality, family, friends, and self-care. It was very important for me during the already tumultuous time for me to find balance between these essential aspects of humanity.

The recovery house that I was a resident at encouraged us to volunteer in our community, to give back in whichever way we wanted to the community that we were currently living. This showed me a different side to life and helped me to be an active member in the world around me. I continue to volunteer when opportunities arise in community. As an organization, we participated in many activities and outings that taught me how to live and enjoy life outside of substance use. Participating in group activities with my peers opened up many opportunities to build relationships and most importantly, group support with these women, learn new skills,

find out what I like to do and don't like to do, learn communication techniques that are essential and emotional intelligence as an adult. Through the support of these amazing women, I was able to build my confidence, learn to speak on my feelings in a way that was safe for me but also allowed others around me to also feel heard and validated, as well as deal with uncomfortable situations head on without the use of substances to distract or numb me.

I came into my recovery journey completely hopeless, alone, homeless, unemployed and with my self-worth at an all-time low. Through my recovery journey I have gained so much. I have learned important skills that I never learned from family or teachers growing up. I am now a responsible, honest and accountable adult who is active in my community. I have built a relationship with my brother and sister-in-law and rebuilt a relationship with my beautiful children, I now live with my children after being estranged from them for two years during my active addiction. I was able to buy a car while in recovery housing and upgrade that car after leaving recovery housing, because I learned how to create and obtain my savings goals. I have held steady employment throughout my sobriety. I work a 12-step program and continue to help other women who are starting their journeys, encouraging my peers to stay honest and accountable, as we grow together. I enjoy being apart of my community, helping out when and where I can at my previous recovery house and in the recovery community. I have excelled at life since coming into recovery housing and I continue to learn and grow daily thanks to the many opportunities and structure I had while in recovery housing.

Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, members of the House Community Revitalization Committee, I would like to sincerely thank you for your time and consideration in regards to House Bill 58.