



THE ROAD TO HOPE INC.

1863 Liberty Ave



Testimony of Jeffrey Kamms, Executive Director, Road to Hope, Inc.

4/25/2025

Chairman Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and members of the House Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Jeffrey Kamms, and I am writing on behalf of The Road to Hope, Inc., a recovery housing program serving Erie, Lorain, Cuyahoga, and adjacent counties. Road to Hope, Inc. provides safe, quality, substance-free housing for people in recovery from substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorders

We appreciate the commitment of this committee and the sponsors of House Bill 58 to improving the quality of recovery housing in Ohio. We share the same goal: to ensure that every Ohioan seeking a recovery residence has access to a safe, supportive, and high-quality home in a community of opportunity. For nearly 20 years, The Road to Hope has been providing quality recovery housing and has been a model of success, an advocate for high standards, and an example in the field of what years of refining and enshrining certain principles and guidelines can do to transform a small grassroots effort into fully functioning compliant, nonprofit organization. 70% of programs are not legit—small, grassroots, passionate but ill-equipped to handle the workload. The certification process makes them come up to a level befitting

The Road to Hope started in 2007 in one rented home where six men with substance use disorder lived together, creating a community of support to help each other achieve a life in long term recovery from substance use. In 2014 we opened a home for twenty-seven men. Our first recovery housing for women opened in 2015. By October of this year the Road to Hope will operate 28 homes capable of serving up to 290 adults and up to 67 children at peak capacity. As of September 2024, the Road to Hope has offered support in the form of recovery housing to 2,766 people. Recovery Housing is an Evidence Based Practice according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and is a unique component of the Continuum of Care as it places emphasis on the Four Domains of Social Recovery: Health, Home, Community. Purpose. RtH creates a home-like environment where residents work on their recovery while improving their health, character, and social networks through





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volunteering, group work, and goal setting. This attention to the standards within each level of recovery housing are core features of the RtH model.

Our housing facilities are certified by Ohio Recovery Housing (ORH) through the national standards established by the National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR). NARR certification requires compliance with national standards, policies, and procedures that ensure quality recovery housing for our residents. The RtH provides quality recovery housing and intensive case management to connect residents to essential recovery services and supports. These services and supports allow people to build the social and environmental factors that are needed to live in long-term recovery. We now offer NARR Level I, II, and III certified recovery housing for men, women, and families in three counties: Erie, Cuyahoga, and Lorain. Our housing program helps a people develop the networks and resources needed to maintain recovery including independent housing; transportation; access to physical and behavioral health care; and a positive social network that is supportive of their recovery.

As one of the larger operators in the state, with homes in 3 counties, we want to reiterate why this legislation will not work as intended. First, and most pressing, two of the three county boards we work with will need more staff to efficiently and objectively complete the tasks proposed in this bill. Their experience working with recovery housing providers is not the same as having experience working in recovery housing. There is a knowledge deficit to consider—ORH and recovery housing providers have worked together for years to develop a standard practice. With respect for our relationship with our county boards, it seems inefficient to add another level of oversight to a well-functioning system. While we appreciate the intent behind HB 58, we join ORH in opposing this legislation as it is currently drafted because we believe it will have unintended consequences that will ultimately harm those it seeks to help. In particular, we are concerned that the people we are trying to help will be negatively impacted by this legislation as it seeks to mitigate issues created by bad actors while ignoring the significant progress and contributions ORH and operators have made to regulate recovery housing.





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As a non-profit we don't do billable services. We depend on county boards and other pathways of generating funding, such as state and local grants, to maintain our financial wellness. In this challenging era, those resources have been reduced or eliminated altogether. The financial impact of certificates of need, for example, would be nearly untenable for the Road to Hope. An additional output of more than \$75,000 in bed fees would require us to increase our annual request of financial support from our county boards. For some operators that additional financial expectation would be an end to their programming. Furthermore, CONs would add a circle of financial redundancy to the relationship we have with our boards—we increase our financial request from the county to pay the state, the state distributes that money back to the county, who gives it to the board to distribute back to the housing operator, and on and on.

The Road to Hope has entered into contracts with each county board, and those contracts give access to the county to address any grievances brought to them by recovery housing residents or staff, community member, neighbor, or public servant. Now that the law requires certification through ORH to operate recovery housing, a county board shouldn't have any trouble contracting with recovery houses in their region so they can do their due diligence to address complaints.

To reiterate a point made by Danielle Gray in her testimony on behalf of Ohio Recovery Housing, HB 58 proposes to shift some of the oversight and regulation of recovery housing from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to the local county ADAMHS boards, most notably the review and investigation of complaints. It also creates redundancies by adding an annual onsite visit to be performed by local county boards, in addition to any onsite visits or reviews that need to be performed as a part of statewide credentialing. While this may seem like a good idea, this duplication of site visits and county by county reviews would actually create problems for operators, especially those of us like Road to Hope with homes in multiple regions. We can expect inspection criteria to be different across country boards, creating confusion, over loading the workforce with unnecessary extra paperwork and distinctive new protocols to follow, and potentially creating loopholes in regulation or even breaks in services that will harm operators who have streamlined services by following the current standards, but more significantly, harm





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may come to the people accessing recovery housing for the frankly lifesaving supports and services they receive there.

In my involvement as a Board Member for the National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR), I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that 31 states have adopted NARR standards and have a state affiliate comparable to ORH that operates as a certifying and regulatory body. Nationwide, states are adopting the model that Ohio has spent the last decade perfecting. In a couple of years, when all the states have adopted this model, Ohio will be an outlier after being a model for other states to follow as an innovator of providing recovery housing services. This legislative shift could impact future funding for recovery housing and other recovery strategies and services, which will hurt operators and their employees but will be devastating to the vulnerable populations we serve across the state every day.

Once again, as the operator of one of the largest recovery housing programs in the state, offering high quality services at all levels of care, I have to advocate for the high standard ORH has put in place which has been a benefit to me and most other operators. And while we appreciate our county boards, and their partnerships which are significant to us, we don't need a new house bill that will disrupt a system that has proven to work. Not only will it create redundancies in annual and administrative site reviews, it ignores the fact that counties already have their own state organization, the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Boards (OACBHA), which represents the interests of Ohio's county ADAMHS boards, and functions for them as ORH functions for the interests of the recovery housing operators. The OACBHA could engage the counties in mediating and developing strategies for working with ORH to address certification and complaint strategies.

The current law prohibits county boards from owning recovery housing, but those that did before the law was approved were grandfathered in. Some of them that do don't like the certification process. They don't want to spend money on staffing since they already own the home, so residents aren't receiving services on the continuum of care other fully staffed operators provide. It's akin to treatment centers owning recovery housing. Their primary interests is in billing for services, and once treatment





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is 'over' the provision of housing ends, whether recovery is attained and can be maintained, or not.

Bad Actors in southern Ohio have compromised the integrity of the recovery housing model that has enabled the Road to Hope to serve more than 3,000 people. Many operators, in fact most operators believe that recovery is possible, and that long term recovery can be a way of life for most of the people who receive services in a recovery home. This happens in part because our focus is directly on our residents and the services we provide for them. Our services are not limited by deductibles, nor are they time stamped. Road to Hope is committed to providing supports for the duration a person needs to achieve recovery. The recovery houses certified through ORH provide a safe place to get 'sober' while developing personal and interpersonal skills, restoring family and community connections, addressing their past with community support from peers with lived experience, and becoming the version of themselves substances prevented them from being. Bad actors and treatment centers who operate recovery housing don't share this commitment to the individual, nor do they value the work that has been done and is ongoing to make recovery housing the significant intervention that it is today. We are concerned that HB 58 will inadvertently create more areas where issues manifested by bad actors will create even more issues, because too many standards and redundant/duplicative requirements will create loopholes that fly by night operators and pump and dump treatment centers could take advantage of.

As one of the largest operators in the state, Road to Hope has been providing services for almost 20 years. And I can confirm that the single oversight body works. We can also attest to the fact that treatment providers are not equipped or qualified to operate recovery housing because they have no oversight body or standard of practice. Our years of experience, and our collaboration with other operators and ORH have made us a model of successful recovery housing operation in Ohio. But even other states have adopted Road to Hope practices and request our input, advice, and even our presence, as they develop their own models and governing bodies to provide quality recovery housing.





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Organizations that have been through so much change in the last five years as we worked to develop and adopt good practice policies and certification processes should not have to do it again. Recovery housing has come a long way and is gaining acceptance, but we still have a precarious relationship with some of our neighbors who are reluctant to share space with 'addicts'. This legislation has the potential to undermine our progress by adding unnecessary requirements to a process that already brings results and could also damage our reputations in our communities where we are building relationships based on service, integrity, and the transformation of lives.

At the end of the day, all I have to say is that it should not be this hard to help people. Our certification process works, our single oversight body works and is a regional and national model for best practice. It is through our lived experience that we know people in recovery need a home—a place to go after treatment where they are safe, where substances are not present, and where their journey is supported by a network of caring and well-trained people, not a county board, not absent landlords, and not well-meaning but distant legislators. We help people with substance use disorder recover and live a life in long term recovery. We never said it would be easy, we said it would be worth it. They are, and it is.

As such, I strongly and firmly reject the wording of HB 58 as it cannot truly support a successful recovery housing model.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Kamms

Executive Director

The Road to Hope, Inc.





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