

Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer, and House Community Revitalization Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Justin Stone. I am here to oppose House Bill 58 as a private citizen with ties to every step in the continuum of care. I have gone through housing that, today, would be considered Ohio Recovery Housing levels 2 and 3. Oxford House Resident Alumni, through that opportunity, became an outreach worker and was a certifying agent for that organization. I oversee 6 ORH level 2 houses as the Men's Housing Manager. HB 58 will directly harm the people and the system it is meant to help—the residents of recovery housing. While I understand the need for accountability and quality control, this bill misses the mark in two critical ways: it increases the financial burden on residents. It shifts oversight to local boards not equipped to handle it effectively.

First, House Bill 58 introduces a new Certificate of Need requirement and adds steeper application fees and penalties for operators. The organizations do not absorb these added costs—they are often passed directly onto the residents.

Most residents in recovery housing are in the early stages of rebuilding their lives. Many are unemployed, underemployed, or on fixed incomes while also managing legal fees, court costs, and the emotional and financial weight of early recovery. The average cost to operate a 3-bedroom recovery house in Toledo is approximately \$1,500 per month for the mortgage; this is not including taxes, utilities, maintenance. To break even, rent would need to be around \$800 per person for a 3-person occupancy. This is with no major unexpected expenses or furnishing the home nor the individuals' personal expenses such as food, transportation, personal hygiene, clothing, etc. The cost for this house would be \$750 just for the bed fees.

In contrast, Oxford House models typically house 6 to 12 residents. For example, Oxford House New Journey—where my own recovery journey began—pays \$3,400 in monthly rent, which does not include utilities or any of the personal expenses previously mentioned. While housing up to 8 men while at capacity, with all beds filled, the cost of living per resident is between \$600 and \$800 per week. This affordability is made possible by shared expenses and a self-governing structure. The fees for the beds here would be an additional \$2000 a year and this would be a tough ask for these residents.

Although it does not seem that this additional cost would be burdensome when operating at full capacity, it is rare that any of these recovery housing opportunities function at capacity. They are generally all operating in the red.

Requiring these homes to shoulder additional costs for regulatory compliance under HB 58 is not just burdensome, it's confiscatory, unreasonable, and dangerous. These

added financial demands could price vulnerable individuals out of safe, structured recovery housing altogether, forcing them back into unstable or unsafe environments—or even onto the streets.

The current law, HB 33, supports operators through state-funded grants and technical assistance. Although the bill demands an inspection fee, it ensures a fair and comfortable living space where people can live with dignity and build or rebuild their self-worth. HB 58 risks turning recovery housing into a privilege, not a lifeline. It may create problems with unintended consequences for law enforcement and/or EMS personnel, with significantly increased costs to smaller local communities with stretched budgets in this inflationary environment.

Second, House Bill 58 transfers monitoring and inspection responsibilities to local ADAMH boards. While well-meaning, these boards are often under-resourced and lack the training and staff capacity to manage recovery housing oversight fairly and effectively.

Ohio MHAS and Ohio Recovery Housing, as it stands, provide centralized oversight and set consistent standards statewide under HB 33. This oversight ensures fairness and quality across all counties.

If HB 58 passes, the quality of oversight could vary wildly depending on where the home is located and the community's socio-economic status or where the home sits within the community. In the case of more wealthy communities, the house may be held to a higher standard. At the same time, those in lower-income or lower-population areas could be approved despite not meeting reasonable living standards or essentially not being up to snuff. Worse, recovery houses could become targets of the “not in my backyard” mentality, where local complaints, stigma, or politics influence inspections or licensing outcomes when we are a protected class by the Americans with Disabilities Act. HB 58 opens the potential for discriminatory, not recovery-focused, living standard evaluations.

People in recovery deserve stable housing wherever they live— not oversight that changes depending on the ZIP code. We all want recovery housing to be safe, effective, and accountable. However, House Bill 58 takes the wrong approach by placing the cost on the backs of residents and creating a patchwork of local oversight.

Instead of limiting access, let's build on what House Bill 33 started—with support, not punishment. Let's invest in recovery, not regulate it into inaccessibility. Thank you.