



A journey and a destination. Recovery happens here!

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February 5, 2022

Proponent Testimony - House Bill 453 "Recovery is Beautiful"

Juliet C. Dorris-Williams, MSW, LISW-S
The P.E.E.R. Center, Columbus, Ohio

Dear Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, ranking member Sheehy,
and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony of **House Bill 453**,
sponsored by Representative Dontavius Jarrells and others.

I am the Executive Director of a drop-in, wellness, recovery, and support center for persons living with mental health, substance use and other addictions, and trauma concerns, and like all my staff, and many of the people we serve, I am a person living in recovery from a mental illness, and a survivor of childhood and adult trauma.

I am still astounded that even with the known statistics, that nearly one in five adults in the United States alone, live with a mental illness, according to the National Institutes of Mental Health – which translates to more than 50 million adults -- many, if not most of us, will not publicly share that information outside of close friends, family, or our health care provider. We do not share out of fear of judgement, out of a sense that our health conditions are something to be ashamed of. And frankly, yes, it is no one else's business. But when public policy impacts our lives, it becomes necessary for those affected to speak out. The assumptions and judgement that can accompany a public disclosure will mean that for for most of us, our recovery journeys, these most transformative experiences of triumph over adversity will not be shared. Our experiences, our strengths, our hopes, will be kept to ourselves. Thereby robbing the world of the opportunity to celebrate our achievement. Worse, robbing others, our neighbors, our friends, our colleagues, who may be suffering in isolation, of the opportunity for the hope of recovery.

The "Recovery is Beautiful" license plate, will be a mini billboard for those of us who choose to attach it to our vehicles. This mini billboard will silently shout for any who see it, that treatment works, recovery is possible, that support is available, that they need not suffer alone, and yes, that recovery is indeed, a beautiful thing. It will also broadcast in a very public way, that these health conditions need not be dark secrets, and that many of us are loud and proud of the lives we've created living in recovery. Lives could be saved by this one, simple act, this one simple statement.



*A journey and a destination.
Recovery happens here!*

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The P.E.E.R Center is a member agency of OhioPRO (Ohio Peer Recovery Organizations, Inc.), a statewide agency supporting peer recovery organizations around the state. Our organizations, while being touted as a critical component of the recovery-oriented system of care, are among the most under invested service modalities in our state. The proceeds from this license plate, that **HB 453** will provide, will be a welcome infusion of funds to help us to continue supporting peer recovery organizations, and the persons we serve, individuals living with mental illness, substance use and other addictions, and trauma related concerns.

Most policy makers believe that investing in mental health and substance use treatment services is the final answer to how the community should respond to these very serious health concerns. I submit to you that treatment services, while vitally important, are still a moment in time. Recovery, in contrast, is *lifetime* management of conditions and symptoms, that will result in most of us living strong and productive lives. This is why we can declare, loudly and proudly, that "Recovery is Beautiful."

I urge you to enthusiastically support this bill.

Respectfully,

Juliet C. Dorris-Williams, MSW, LISW-S
Executive Director
The P.E.E.R. Center