

March 20, 2023

RE: HF 2847 and Sober Homes

The Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (OMHDD) has a statutory mission to promote the highest attainable standards of treatment, competence, efficiency, and justice for persons receiving services for mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency, or emotional disturbance. We advocate for clients' rights, health, and well-being; monitor service delivery systems; and provide recommendations for systemic improvements.

We write today to encourage and thank you for your support of HF 2847, specifically the provisions creating some oversight of and consumer protections surrounding sober homes. For years, we have had concerns about the vulnerability of clients in unregulated sober home settings after receiving complaints alleging rights violations, abrupt discharge without cause or due process, losing substantial security deposits in the absence of property damage, lack of any meaningful grievance process, and substandard living conditions. We shared these concerns with the Legislature in February 2021 and were pleased to see the broader stakeholder conversation culminate in a workgroup to study potential oversight of these settings.

OMHDD appreciates having the opportunity to participate in the Sober Home Workgroup with staff from the Department of Human Services (DHS), NAMI and other advocacy organizations, clients and family members with lived experiences in these settings, counties and SUD treatment providers, and sober home operators. There were many robust discussions and perspectives shared, leading to recommendations to best position sober homes as a critical option among the continuum of care for those seeking SUD treatment and recovery support services in Minnesota.

The provisions and protections in HF 2847 will create much needed clarity and consistency in the service continuum surrounding the definition of a sober home; delineating rights in these settings; creating a clear external complaint mechanism; providing protections surrounding abrupt discharges and property; and requiring staff training on person-centered planning, de-escalation, mental health crises, and becoming a culturally informed and responsive sober home. OMHDD applauds these efforts and hopes to be a partner in the implementation of these provisions.

Sincerely,



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