

March 15, 2023 – In Support of HF 2552

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and members. My name is Randy Anderson and I'm a person living in long term recovery from substance use. What that means to me is, I have not had any alcohol, drugs, or mood-altering substance since January 9, 2005, and because of my recovery I'm able to have healthy relationships, own a home, run a successful recovery focused small business, vote, and even pay taxes. I'm also a Minnesota state licensed alcohol and drug counselor, a peer recovery specialist supervisor and a formerly incarcerated person who was sentenced to 87 months in prison as a first-time non-violent drug user with little to no criminal history.

As overdoses and overdose deaths continue to skyrocket it is clear to me that we are doing, and have always done, isn't working very well. We need to think outside the box and invest in new and innovative services to help Minnesotans struggling with substance use find a path to recovery.

I've traveled across this country, and I can tell you that Minnesota has one of the most, if not the most robust treatment systems anywhere. We do an above average job getting someone into a treatment program to initiate their recovery journey. What we don't do a very good job of, and frankly neither does most of the country, is working with the person before or after treatment and not everyone that struggles with substance use will need formalized treatment.

There is an enormous amount of growing evidence that shows the effectiveness of peer recovery support services. A Certified Peer Recovery Specialist is an individual who can meet people struggling with substance use, or already in recovery, where they are and walk with them to find the path of recovery that works best for each person.

Minnesota has many amazing organizations that have trained thousands of individuals to become certified peer recovery specialist. Unfortunately, many of those individuals never enter the workforce for a variety of reasons. Just imagine if we had more opportunities for those trained professionals to find meaningful employment in a community where they grew up, went to school, a community or city that they call home and care deeply about. Imagine if, in some cases they didn't have to worry about a DHS background study not allowing them to help the very community that they once may have negatively impacted.

Peer recovery specialists are now working in places across the spectrum of care and in more diverse locations than ever, throughout the state, such as hospitals, prisons/jails, recovery high schools, collegiate recovery programs and more. As this service grows and expands, we need to ensure that there is oversight, some regulation, accountability, inspection, and enforcement to maintain a high quality of service and protect the workers and those that they serve. The Minnesota Board of Recovery Services could do this and more.

I have met with and received input from dozens of individuals from the recovery community and we all agree that any such regulatory body and governing should be done by the recovery community. Still, and for too long, recovery voices have been an afterthought and don't always get a seat at the table. My father once told me, either you have a seat at the table, or you are probably on the menu. I for one refuse to be on anyone's menu. We, the recovery community believe it's time that we create our own table, and we, invite all of you, to join us. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with all of you today.

Randy Anderson, RCPF, LADC

Person in Long Term Recovery

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"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." – Mark Twain.