

Subject: HF 2847 – Sober Home Regulation

Esteemed Committee Members,

First, I would like to thank you for your time and service. As a former police officer and city council member I appreciate your service to our state and your constituents. This bill was recently brought to my attention, and I felt something needed to be said to address a few items as well as provide some context to negative effects as the legislation is currently written. My background as a stake holder is our church hosts a very large recovery meeting every week. Many of our members are in various stages of addiction recovery. Sober homes play a vital role to sustained and long-term recovery as it fills a gap from treatment to the full swing of life. When someone gets out of a treatment program having a structured place to live while re-establishing themselves is vital to long term success.

As the legislation currently reads it would impose undue regulation and eliminate this vital recovery tool. I want to be clear that no one is against regulation just as it stands would be making something that is not clinical and not meant to be clinical, clinical. The tenants of AA and other sober groups that practice the 12 steps, teach how community and those who have worked the program teach others the program. This is a successful model and not intended to be that of clinical in nature as those places already exist.

I offer a couple of examples of the negative impact of the legislation as it is currently written. If an individual who has a home and is a sober alcoholic and wishes to provide a safe place to live for another alcoholic or 2-3, they would need to meet specific guidelines to which they are not equipped. This is not a business but rather an individual. I can provide many examples of people who currently open their home, charge rent and have a requirement of sobriety.

As it relates to the requirement for certification, places that receive governmental funding already are required to have many if not all of requirements in place. My question would be then is the purpose of this legislation to regulate businesses that are already regulated or impose restrictions and reduce “sober homes”.

I have not seen any studies or information in the minuetts that sheds light as to how this area of the bill was crafted and what is the intent. What stake holders’ input was used? Was there due diligence done by inquiring with individuals and businesses who have maintained and sustained a long track record of “operating a sober home”?

If the goal is to provide “consumer protection” as well as support important recovery structure, I implore you to have a 360 look at this bill. Clean up the language and have a full understanding of the needs of the recovery track as well as the sober community.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Brendan Banks

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