



Minnesota Association of Sober Homes
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Dear Human Services Finance Committee,

Our organization operates a sober home in your district and we feel the need to communicate our concerns over Section 24 of the proposed bills; HF2487 & SF 2934. Our chief concern is that one of the primary goals of the Sober Home task force established in HF 287, was to increase access to sober housing. However due to the various mandates and costs of compliance within this bill, there is the potential to create a sober housing crisis in which residents are priced out of sober homes, and existing sober homes forced to close.

The staffing and medication handling requirements of this bill will prove cost restrictive for both residents and sober house operators. Already we have heard from many sober home operators that these costs of compliance will cause them to shut down homes. For example, hiring 1 staff member with the required credentials would likely cost \$40,000 annually. That cost split between a 10 resident home would increase the cost of sober living by \$333 a month. Many sober homes are only \$550 a month to begin with. These staffing costs will price out many residents who may be starting out in employment or earning minimum wage. Decreasing access to sober homes at this critical time will lead to more homeless individuals. People will die from this bill because individuals need and deserve a safe environment to work on their recovery.

DHS was supposed to release the final report of their study group on September 1st, 2022. The report is now over 6 months late and DHS is asking legislators to consider a bill on an issue without the report the legislators commissioned. Furthermore, the study group did not reach a consensus between stakeholder groups.

To supplement this bill, DHS is asking for over 1 million dollars to create a certification process for sober homes. Instead of reinventing the wheel, we should fund MASH's existing certification process that uses the SAMHSA endorsed NARR Standards.

Many homes would be legally required to be certified through DHS on July 1 2023. However, DHS' proposed certification process would not be established until at least 2027, as stated in the Human Services FY 2024-25 Biennial Budget Change Item. Sober homes will be mandated to be certified by a program that won't be established for another 4 years. Luckily, The Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (MASH) has already implemented the SAMHSA

endorsed NARR Standards as a certification process. The state should work with MASH to build upon this success.

This bill requires a criminal background check for sober home staff without stating what level of criminal history would prohibit someone from working in this field. Many individuals in the recovery field have a criminal background e.g. DWI, possession, etc. and this may prohibit valuable individuals from working in the field.

Action seems premature at this point considering that poor regulation could severely impact housing for people in need of sober living. Therefore, we recommend this entire section be removed from this bill.

Until next session, MASH will continue to work with stakeholders to develop sound policy that does not threaten the existing sober housing. During this time of historic overdose rates, can we afford to rush potentially harmful legislation?