

Written/Oral Testimony in Opposition to S.F. 3973 (Mann)
Minnesota Senate Human Services Committee
February 26, 2024

Chair Hoffman, Senator Mann, and Human Services Committee Members,

My name is John Curtiss and I am the president/CEO of The Retreat, a 171 bed community based, supportive educational continuum of addiction recovery services. And, the co-founder and current board member of the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (MASH).

I'm speaking in response to the amendment in Sober Home bill S.F. 3973 Section 8, that mandates all sober homes accept all forms of MAT medications (e.g., methadone & buprenorphine) and ANY medication that a physician prescribes for ANY co-occurring condition.

This will make it illegal to not allow methadone, Suboxone, benzodiazepines, adderall and other amphetamines, or any other addictive mood altering substances as long as a resident can find a doctor to prescribe it.

I'm not referring to commonly prescribed psychiatric medications such as SSRI's, Trazodone, Seroquel, ect., we would never restrict these non-addictive medications.

For those suffering from moderate to severe SUD, and in particular, those with a history of multiple agent abuse (which is most of the community we serve) this bill would be devastating.

With a medical community, that has little to no training in addiction medicine, and an addicted population of men and women who are quite proficient at "doctor shopping" to find highly addictive mood altering substances to feed their addictions from unsuspecting physicians this amendment is a dangerous slippery slope that will devastate the sober living community in our state.

You are, in effect, by law, eliminating all abstinence based sober homes from the recovery marketplace in our state. Forcing them into a harm reduction model which will create numerous, expensive, and potentially deadly relapses. It will make all our homes less safe for those who require, and desire, an environment free from highly addictive mood altering substances while they take their first critical steps toward a life of recovery.

In Minnesota, there are many Harm Reduction homes and some Wet houses. If we really do support "person-centered care" and "many pathways to recovery" then we

must do everything we can to preserve the choice people make to live in abstinence based Sober Homes! This is about CHOICE.

As a 46 year professional in the addiction treatment field, who has worked with thousands of patients suffering from this disease, I can tell you with authority that most of the people we serve need an abstinence based, alcohol & mood altering drug free sober living environment. These patients, with moderate to severe SUD, are in effect, addicted to the “state of intoxication” and frequently experience the phenomenon of cross dependency, moving from one mood altering substance to another to get high. Many of whom have had a long history of abusing MAT medications and want, and need, an abstinence based pathway to recovery. Forcing all Sober homes to allow ANY drug a physician prescribes will create a dangerous environment for those we serve. We must ensure that there are always some abstinence based sober home options for this population in our state.

I strongly recommend that the amendment in Section 8 be removed from this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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