



## HUMANISTS MN

March 12, 2024

The Honorable Sen. John A. Hoffman  
Chair, Human Services Committee  
2111 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Ave. W  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Rep. Peter Fischer  
Chair, Human Services Policy Committee  
551 State Office Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: SUPPORT HF 3486/SF 3459, HumanistsMN letter of support for Minnesota Recovery Options Act

Dear Chairperson Hoffman, Chairperson Fischer and Members of Senate Human Services Committee and House Human Services Policy Committee:

HumanistsMN, a Minnesota secular community for ethical living, writes in support of HF 3486/SF 3459, the Minnesota Recovery Options Act. This bill would ensure that, when Minnesotans are required by the state to receive treatment for substance use disorders, they can receive appropriate treatment without religious coercion. Under current Minnesota law, individuals in the criminal legal system can be required to participate in religious treatment programs that conflict with their beliefs, which is unconstitutional and can hinder successful treatment.

HumanistsMN represents humanists and other nontheists who find meaning in life outside of organized religion. We believe strongly that government programs should not give preference to one religion over another or to the religious over the nonreligious. Our members should have access to treatment programs that will be most effective for them.

Approximately 27 percent of Minnesotans are religiously unaffiliated and 5 percent are religious minorities, so it is essential that a diverse range of treatment programs for substance use disorders be available, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Too often, however, individuals are required by the state to participate in religious programs that can hinder successful treatment – for example, ubiquitous 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Indeed, courts have repeatedly upheld defendants' rights to avoid being coerced to participate in religious substance use disorder treatment programs that they object to. For example, in a recent West Virginia case, a man won a preliminary injunction to prevent the state from forcing him to participate in deeply religious 12-step programming to qualify for parole.

Substance use disorders are serious health issues. The Minnesota Recovery Options Act would protect everyone's right to religious freedom by ensuring that no one is required to participate in treatment programs that conflict with their beliefs.

HumanistsMN strongly urges you to pass HF 3486/SF 3459 to protect the health, well-being, and civil rights of Minnesotans. If you have any questions regarding our support for HF 3486/SF 3459, please contact me by email at [president@humanistsmn.org](mailto:president@humanistsmn.org).

Sincerely,

Ellie Haylund  
President  
HumanistsMN