



March 7, 2024

Subject: Support for the Minnesota Recovery Options Act (SF3459)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express LifeRing Secular Recovery's strong support for the Minnesota Recovery Options Act (SF3459), which seeks to amend various sections of the Minnesota Statutes to ensure that all individuals in the Minnesota criminal justice system have access to treatment and recovery support programs that align with their constitutional rights under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

If passed, this act will provide individuals in the judiciary system with the option to participate in treatment and recovery support programs that do not have a religious affiliation. It aims to ensure that substance use disorder treatment programs are accessible to all individuals, irrespective of their beliefs, and that alcohol and drug counselors are equipped with the knowledge of secular treatment approaches to better serve those in need.

### **Key Provisions of the Minnesota Recovery Options Act**

The act aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Prevent courts and state agencies from mandating participation in religious elements of substance use disorder treatment programs for individuals who object to them.
2. Ensure that individuals who object to mandatory religious substance use disorder treatment programs have access to alternative programs that are in line with their beliefs.



3. Encourage the recognition of a diverse range of substance use disorder treatment programs to meet the needs of all Minnesotans, regardless of their beliefs.
4. Modify continuing education requirements for alcohol and drug counselors to include information about secular treatment approaches.

### **Support from LifeRing Secular Recovery**

We are pleased to support the Minnesota Recovery Options Act, as it complements our mission to provide diverse, decentralized, and community-based support for individuals seeking recovery from substance use challenges. The act's emphasis on expanding access to a range of recovery services and empowering individuals in their recovery journey resonates with LifeRing's commitment to comprehensive secular recovery support.

### **Addressing the Substance Use Crisis**

The problematic substance use crisis, which affects individuals with alcohol use disorder, opioid use disorder, methamphetamine use disorder, and other substance use disorders, has had a significant impact on our communities. It has led to a high rate of treatment admissions from the criminal justice system and has disproportionately affected younger Americans and people of color. Addressing this crisis requires expanding treatment options and ensuring that nonreligious alternatives are available to create a more equitable system for everyone.

### **Ensuring First Amendment Rights**

Furthermore, making nonreligious treatment options available is consistent with established law. Many defendants are unable to secure these rights due



to the cost of legal representation and a lack of awareness about their First Amendment rights in this context. Therefore, a state law ensuring these rights is crucial.

We urge you to join us in advocating for the adoption of the Recovery Options Act (SF3459) to ensure that nonreligious alternatives are available to those seeking recovery support. No individual, especially a defendant in a criminal case, should be compelled to forfeit their First Amendment rights.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we hope for your endorsement to ensure individuals in Minnesota have access to the resources and support they need to achieve and sustain recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Betts".

Sue Betts, Chair  
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