

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Devin Edge, and I am a member of Oxford House - Nauck, located in Arlington, Virginia. Oxford House has provided me housing and rehabilitative support to aid me in my recovery. The Oxford House Charter and System of Operations provides me accountability and structure that leads to a successfully run, and safe recovery home with high standards. I believe the self-run, self-supporting nature of Oxford House helps make this house and the people in it successful.

**I am in opposition to HB277 which removes Oxford House as one of the certifying entities.**

If this bill is passed, it will lead to the decertification and closing of the 158 Oxford Houses providing over 1,300 recovery beds across the state. This would leave these individuals who are already residing in recovery residences homeless.

Requiring all certified recovery residences be staffed would eliminate not only all Oxford Houses but any NARR-certified Level 1 recovery residences and violates the Fair Housing Act by imposing discriminatory terms and conditions and a negative impact on similarly situated recovery residences. Research shows the non-staffed, self-governing aspect of Oxford House is critical to the unparalleled abstinence rates it produces.

Oxford Houses represent a significant majority of all recovery residences in Virginia. Decertifying them would drastically reduce the availability of much-needed recovery housing that would detrimentally impact the citizens of Virginia who suffer from substance use disorders and their families. It would increase the financial burden of addiction on the state and increase recidivism rates, unnecessarily costing taxpayers more in jails and prisons.

All DBHDS health regions are well-represented in the distribution of Oxford Houses.

VARR-certified houses are highly concentrated in the metro-Richmond area, with significantly less presence in regions outside Region 4.

Region 1 – 30 Oxford Houses, Region 2 – 60 Oxford Houses, Region 3 – 19 Oxford Houses, Region 4 – 12 Oxford Houses, and Region 5 – 37 Oxford Houses.

The proposed changes to the law were not developed in an appropriate way with all impacted stakeholders, including DBHDS, OHI, and VARR, but were instead developed in an abbreviated time period with no consultation or input from OHI. The proposed changes to existing law that remove OHI as a credentialing entity and require all certified recovery residences to be staffed should be removed or HB277 should be defeated. Oxford House believes there needs to be a legislative workgroup convened to discuss the merits and impact of any changes to existing law and how we can best serve and keep healthy and safe the citizens of Virginia.

**PLEASE VOTE NO TO HB277**