



March 16, 2026

Representative Stephen Casey, Chair

House Municipal Government & Housing Committee

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

RE: 8040

Dear Chairman Casey and honorable Committee Members:

We are writing in strong support of H8040, relating to zoning ordinances for recovery houses in Rhode Island. Currently, the state “sober house” fire code interpretation defines recovery residences as “congregate family living”. Zoning a recovery residence differently than a single-family home simply because it is a recovery residence violates Federal Fair Housing (FFHA) and Federal Disability Laws (ADA) which prohibits housing discrimination based on disability, which includes individuals in recovery from substance use disorder. The Federal Fair Housing Law additionally states that cities cannot impose zoning or land-use restrictions that treat sober living homes differently from other residential housing. This important legislation will protect certified recovery houses, their operators, and residents against these discriminatory policies by prohibiting any city or town from enacting any zoning ordinance that would place restrictions on recovery houses that are not applicable to other residential homes.

In 2024 H7382 amended RI General Law 45-24-31 which defines NARR (National Alliance for Recovery Residence) certified recovery houses as a household and exempt from maximum occupancy definitions under a household. Rhode Island Communities for Addiction Recovery Efforts (RICARES) serves as the State’s NARR affiliate and is responsible for overseeing the ethical and safety standards for recovery residences in the State of Rhode Island and certifying residences based on the standards established by NARR. These standards ensure accountability and serve as best practices for the operation of recovery residences.

Rezoning a recovery house would create significant financial barriers that would result in their closures and the loss of hundreds of recovery housing beds across the state, which would be devastating for our all Rhode Islanders who desperately need the resource. At a time when resources are already limited, taking away someone’s access to a housing opportunity or the potential entry point into their recovery journey is disempowering for our community, and does not foster growth. With the passing of H8040, recovery residences can remain familial home

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environments where they are nurturing, family environments, not facilities. This is how we promote healing and show that recovery is possible.

We respectfully urge the committee to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

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Senior Recovery Policy Advocate

Stacey Levin

Deputy Director

Sarah Edwards

Assistant Director of Recovery Housing

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