



TIDES FAMILY SERVICES
WE NEVER GIVE UP ON A KID... NEVER!

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Memo to Chair of the Senate Judiciary and Members:

My name is Beth Bixby, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Tides Family Services. I write today in support of S3099 to change the term of drug court to recovery court.

Tides Family Services works every day with Rhode Island's most vulnerable children and families — youth in crisis, youth involved with DCYF, and families who are doing everything they can to keep their children safely at home. We see firsthand what happens when systems work well — and what happens when they do not.

The shift from the "drug court" to "recovery court" signifies a critical evolution in the justice system, where language is intentionally used to reduce stigma, improve treatment engagement, and foster a more supportive, therapeutic environment. The language used by practitioners—including judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys—has the power to either foster an environment of rehabilitation or perpetuate stigma that leads to failure.

Moving away from punitive, stigmatizing labels such as "addict" or "substance abuser" to person-first language (e.g., "person with a substance use disorder") helps reframe addiction as a chronic, treatable disease rather than a moral failing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beth Bixby, LICSW

Chief Executive Officer