



NARRATIVE OF TESTIMONY BY TIM ROBINSON,
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FOR THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND INSURANCE
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Good morning. My name is Tim Robinson, CEO of Addiction Recovery Care.

More people died from overdoses than car accidents last year making addiction a national public health crisis that is taking too many lives and threatening our economic security as employers struggle to find and retain employees. Last year our Kentucky Chamber of Commerce CEO wrote an Op Editorial that called addiction the number one economic concern in our state.

Everyone is looking for a silver bullet to address the addiction crisis. There isn't a silver bullet. Addiction recovery requires a whole-person approach which starts with intervening with treatment, investing in someone's economic future by providing access to transitional housing, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, and inspiring them from day one that there is hope to go from crisis to a career.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to you because recovery is personal to me. I started drinking in my first year of law school at the University of Kentucky to cope with my mom passing away during finals. For the next eight years, I almost drank myself to death. Eleven years ago, while I was a prosecuting attorney in Lawrence County, Kentucky, a court bailiff who was a recovering alcoholic and pastor, led me to a spiritual awakening at my desk. He became my sponsor and my pastor. Addiction recovery is personal to me because I am a survivor.

Two years later in 2008, I resigned as prosecutor and in 2010 opened a residential center for women in rural Eastern Kentucky. Today we have 350 residential clients and 500 outpatient clients in centers across 12 counties in Kentucky. Our experience has taught us that addiction is a disease that devastates all aspects of a person's life impacting someone's mind, body, spirit, and purpose. We have been determined to treat addiction medically, clinically, spiritually, and vocationally.

Our centers are led by an addictionologist and are nationally accredited. We have developed a spirituality program that inspires hope and offers redemption. Much like hospice centers, we employ chaplains who work alongside of our clinical staff. Though we consider the spiritual aspect of our centers to be the heart of our success - our spirituality program does not replace medical and evidence-based clinical practices - it is an addition to them and makes our care more comprehensive.

Treating the whole person has led to great success. One of our payors recently reported to us that our centers reduced their members' healthcare costs by 33% during the 6 months after program completion.

We created an internship with a promise that everyone who completes the program would be guaranteed a job. Today, 190 of our three hundred and eighty (380) employees are in recovery and 130 are graduates of our programs.

We are a state-certified, Peer Support Specialist (PSS) training program. A Peer Support Specialist is a Medicaid-billable professional who has one year of sobriety and completes a certification program.

We partnered with workforce board, Eastern Kentucky CEP, and with Sullivan University to expand our internship into a 6-month career academy. Our graduates earn state certification and college credit. In just one year, a person in addiction can go from an IV heroin user to supporting themselves, literally going from crisis to career.

To date, 41 of our 46 or 85% of our academy graduates are clean and sober, working full time, paying taxes and transitioning off public assistance. Some of the graduates have even been promoted to management, and others are continuing their education for careers such as counseling.

Prior to the Academy, 40% of our clients chose to continue treatment beyond detox and residential care. After starting the Academy, 70% of our clients now choose to continue treatment doubling treatment motivation.

Vocational education that leads to a meaningful career that provides the dignity of work gives those reentering the workforce the confidence necessary to establish career goals and plan for their future. Because of this success we are adding other programs such as an auto mechanics academy.

Kentucky is leading the way in access to treatment because of the national leader on this issue, Congressman Hal Rogers and the efforts of our Governor Matt Bevin. The two biggest challenges preventing us from taking more people from crisis to a career is a lack of funding for workforce development and transitional housing. That's why I am so excited about Congressman Andy Barr's bill, the T.H.R.I.V.E. Act and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's C.A.R.E.E.R. Act. These two historic pieces of legislation have the potential to transform the national effort to combat the drug epidemic.

The hope of America is not merely surviving. The hope of America is an opportunity to flourish. That is what our brothers and sisters in addiction need; an opportunity. An opportunity for treatment, transitional housing, and workforce development that leads to a meaningful career path, and when the opportunity is given...I have seen us not just survive, but thrive. Our current human capital and labor shortage can be solved at the same time we combat the drug epidemic as we take those struggling with addiction from crisis to career.