

## Commissioner Shannon

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December 5, 2023

Chairs and Committee Members,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify at yesterday's hearing.

I would state however that I felt my testimony was fairly ineffective due to the 2-minute time limit which left very little time to discuss details after introduction and explanation of purpose.

I would like to address some specific details I did not get to discuss yesterday through written testimony.

As I stated yesterday:

I have been in recovery for over 32 years.

I spent 7 years as a volunteer at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in recovery sessions with DOC Adults in Custody from 2013-2020.

In the last 6 months I have completed 5 of the 6 required trainings to become a CADC 1 and will complete the last training in January 2024.

I have worked with literally thousands of men and women who have had a desire to recover for substance abuse during the last 3 decades.

I am extremely concerned about BM110 and the obvious failures and negative results. I was convinced when it passed that this is where we were headed. I am shocked by the lack of understanding from lawmakers and the policies that have been or have not been implemented by those that do not know what recovery is or how it works.

I would also state that using data in regards to the number of those addicted and those that have recovered is using data that does not exist and impossible to attain. It simply is being used to drive a false narrative in support of BM110. If you think about it, you can only come to one conclusion about the accuracy of such statements and relapse statistics makes them even more impossible to obtain.

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It has been disturbing to listen to comments stating that jail or prison is never effective. My experience has been that the most solid recovery I have ever been around had been the recovery of gentlemen that have been incarcerated at TRCI. Consequences do work. These men are grateful they have been removed from the horrible situations they come from. Their families are often grateful that their loved ones are now somewhere getting help and safe from the lives they have been living.

Recovery generally does not just happen. It is normally driven by a crisis followed by surrender. BM110 does not offer this effective path to recovery.

I believe that a focus on prevention is essential, but more focus on peer support will be the most successful path out of the situation we have helped to create.

I might be able to support Harm Reduction if there is a clear path to abstinence. It is against my belief system to consider that trading one mind altering substance for another is a great idea. I can not really consider it because it is a thought that could lead me to relapse and death.

In closing I would like to communicate my disappointment that the DOC System is not in the discussion as part of the solution. I believe policy changes in these institutions and using the facilities could help address the complex issues we are now facing. There currently is not a true treatment system in place for substance abuse other than volunteer peer support and one on one counseling. It has been proven that the most effective method of treatment is group therapy and it does not exist in the DOC Institutions. Why don't we take at least a portion of these facilities and use them for Correction as in the "Department of Corrections" and stop using them as punishment. A term we use at NORCOR where I sit on the executive board is companionate incarceration.

Please remember that addiction happens fast and recovery is excruciatingly slow.

Thanks for your time,  
Commissioner Shannon