



**COMMENTS ON PROPOSED BHDDH REGULATIONS FOR THE LICENSING OF ORGANIZATIONS AND FACILITIES LICENSED BY BHDDH [212-RICR-10-00-1] October 2018**

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of RICARES.

We are very concerned about Section 1.21(D), which addresses the disqualification of individuals from employment. We are also confused about the need for the scope of the section.

We are also perplexed, as the language and intent of 1.21(D) contradicts the public statements, the implicit messages, and the noteworthy initiatives around such issues as stigma reduction and workforce development that the Department publicly presents. The language and intent seem, in fact, to undermine the positive and supportive positions of the Department. The language and intent seem to contradict knowledge and awareness that we believe resides in the Department.

We are concerned that the Department (and the State) continues to equate victimless crimes such as drug possession and prostitution with victimizing crimes such as felony assault, robbery, sexual assault, and transportation for indecent purposes.

We believe that the Department is aware that drug possession and prostitution offenses are a common occurrence in the addiction careers of many people in recovery. The Department is also aware that a significant number of people in recovery develop the career goal of using their lived experience to give back by working with people with addictions. The Department is aware that the combination of lived experience, and appropriate education and training results in effective peer specialists and clinicians. An effective and appropriate workplace includes licensed treatment agencies where we can be employed as Peer Recovery Specialists or as licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors.

We believe that the Department is aware that the criminal justice system is not a level playing field and is aware of the multiple studies that show that people of color are arrested for drug possession at a significantly higher rate than whites (despite consistent studies that indicate almost equal rates of use). It is clear that people of color will be disproportionately affected by this requirement.

We believe that the Department is aware of the disparity in the criminal justice system that is a function of socioeconomic status. It is clear that people of lower socioeconomic status will be disproportionately affected by this requirement.

We do not understand the need of the Department to develop the exclusionary status of drug possession and prostitution offenses in a workplace that widely encompasses both staff and patients who share these similar histories.

We do not understand the need of the department to engage in the judgmental and gender-specific targeting of women (who comprise the vast majority of people convicted of prostitution).

Finally, we do not understand the need of the Department to develop this stigmatizing, humiliating, minimizing, and shaming pre-requisite for employment.

We urge the Department to be consistent with your demonstrated values of respect, concern, and consideration of people with substance use disorders and in recovery and to reexamine and significantly revise Section 1.21 to reflect the concerns that we and other stakeholder organizations have raised.

We support and endorse all the testimony that you have received from the ACLU-RI and from Protect Families First.

If the concerns we have raised are not addressed, we request that you explain why our concerns are disregarded.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

8/21/14

New hire paperwork and forms need to be filled out within the first three days from an offer of employment. This is a really important period of growth for RICARES and we are excited that you are a part of it!

Please sign this letter and return it to RICARES. Once both signatures are collected you will get a copy of the letter as well.

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Signature

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Signature

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Title

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Title

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Date

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Date