

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CONSTITUENT COMMENTS ON SOBER LIVING HOME PROBLEMS

HON. DANA ROHRBACHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 19, 2018

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise again regarding the hearing held by the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice on September 28, 2018 on the issue of sober living homes. At that hearing, I had the privilege of testifying in support of my bill, H.R. 5724, to restore local oversight over sober living homes. As part of my testimony, I submitted to the Subcommittee letters from many of my constituents about problems with sober living homes caused by current federal law preventing appropriate local oversight. For the benefit of my colleagues and the American people, I include in the RECORD the fifth group of these constituent letters:

Thank you for bringing our issues with Sober Living Homes (SLH) in our neighborhoods to congress. Here is the nightmare my husband, two young sons and I have endured over the past 1.5 years.

We live in downtown Huntington Beach that had been known for our lovely beaches and quaint surf culture community, now we are called Rehab Riviera. My nightmare began in April 2017, when the owner of the house across the street from me opted turn down \$3800 in rent per month to dozens of families wanting to rent it and instead he sold out the neighborhood for \$9000 a month in rent to a business, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was started by two addicts, [NAME] and [NAME] 1 year and 4 months out of a recovery. They have no special training, they are not licensed by the State of California, DHHS does not regulate their business and they especially do not have hand-picked doctors, per their website, taking care of the young lives at [ADDRESS]. On February 24, 2018, a handsome, sweet young man, [NAME], overdosed, in the care of [REDACTED], at [ADDRESS]. His body laid in his bed for over 8 hours before it was discovered. Then his fluid-soaked mattress laid on the sidewalk between the home and the wall separating the houses for 2 weeks before it was finally disposed of properly. On March 13, 2018 [NAME] co-owner of [REDACTED] overdosed at his home in Fountain Valley. According to the reports, [NAME] was apparently facing pressure on several fronts. Last year, a text exchange between [NAME]'s business partner, [NAME], and an addict, went public in that forum, laying bare an increasingly-common scam: Addicts demanding to be paid to get surgical implants of opioid-blocking drugs. The idea is that the addicts know rehab operators and doctors can bill insurance companies thousands of dollars per procedure.

I shared the above so you have an idea of the type of so-called Sober Living Home I am dealing with. A business opened by two addicts just to make money while they scam the system and allow young men to die and overdose (survive) in their care. After [NAME] overdose at the unlicensed home I was sure that someone on a state or federal level would have shut them down but nothing

happened. The house manager, known as [NAME] (no idea what his real name is) has allowed 2 more young men to overdose under his care but luckily both survived. When we asked [NAME] about them he stated they were kicked out of the house and if you have spent any time in Southern California lately, that just means there are now 2 more homeless addicts on the streets. All the clients at [REDACTED] have been flown here from other parts of the country and a few of them have told me that it was a one-way ticket and if they want to go home they have to do it with their own funds. They also tell me they get money whenever they bring in another client into the house. . . .

In addition to the above the neighbors and I have endured the following: drug deals going down on our street. The clients getting blow jobs while sitting in their cars parked in front of our homes. Constant foul language coming from the clients and their "friends" who come to visit. Young men wearing their pants down to their knees, ghetto music (music that is loud and contains profanity) blaring from their cars and out of the house. At times there are 14 cars on our block from the 7 clients and their 7 girlfriends so we cannot park in front of our homes. I have two young boys and I am constantly bringing in groceries or lugging out sports bags, so having to walk a block away to get to and from my car. Trash in the street and in the alley. Hypodermic needles have been found, one of them in the neighbor's backyard. The neighbors to the south of [REDACTED] are elderly and they can't have their grandkids come over and play outside anymore in fear of a hypodermic needle impaling itself into their little bodies when it comes flying over the wall between the homes.

In addition, the clients toss their cigarette butts over the fence into the same neighbor's back yard. The same neighbors can no longer leave their windows open to get fresh air since they are constantly bombarded with cigarette smoke.

Countless fighting going on in the house that has resulted in countless police visits. Intimidation from the clients. There have been many occasions when I am outside in front of my home and one of the clients will stand across the street, drawing on his cigarette, with his pants down to his knees, staring me down and glaring at my every move. My kids use to skateboard in front of our house, or toss the football, but now they don't want to be out there. We felt compelled to put up cameras, keep our doors shut and our window curtains drawn.

Increase in petty thefts. If we mistakenly leave our cars unlocked the content is stolen during the night. I watched two addicts (not from [REDACTED]) walking down the alley a few months ago tugging on every door handle they passed. Then they attempted to break into a shed on a neighbor's property while I had run home to get my phone and call the police.

When we (the neighbors) have complained to [NAME] he tells us to stop talking to his clients, they are grown men and there is nothing he can do about the issues. His big solution is to kick them out after they overdose, if they are lucky enough to survive. So, I don't understand how [REDACTED] can run a scam business in my neighborhood. I live a residential zoned neighborhood not in

a business zone. How can they stay in operations when the state knows they are unlicensed, their website was criminally misleading, and they are allowing young men to OD and die in their "care"?

I grew up in poverty, crawled my way out of it by going to college on Pell grants (thank you government for giving me a hand up, not a hand out), worked very hard to be able to buy my mother a home and then myself one in 1995. I have lived here for 23 years and before April 2017 it has been a quiet, peaceful neighborhood with thoughtful and kind neighbors. Now the SLH has greatly reduced the quality of life my family and I had once enjoyed in our home. We are no longer comfortable in our home, nor on our street. On August 13, 2018 we found out that a recently purchased home (at [ADDRESS]) 3 doors down from [ADDRESS] is also going to be a sober living home. We have two side-by-side in the [REDACTED] block of California street. Two more in the [REDACTED] block of Huntington street (one street over) and countless more throughout the neighborhood. We understand that a recovery center is building their headquarters in downtown HB. Seriously? Do you know how expensive real estate is in Southern California, and these guys can afford to build a high-rise headquarters 3 blocks from the ocean and a stone throw away from two blocks of bars. This is not about helping these addicts find recovery, this is about money, lots of money! They want to bring them here to this environment, so they stayed hooked on the drugs and they can continue to scam the America tax payers!

CATHERINE YOUNG,
Huntington Beach, California.

A Sober Living Facility has moved in next door to my house one and a half years ago. It has probably lowered the value of my house at least \$100,000 because no one wants to move in next to a facility like this. I live in Huntington Beach because of the cool coastal breezes and now I have to close my windows because they are constantly smoking in the back yard. There are often cigarette stubs on the curb and trash around the house. One girl overdosed there last year so the fire stations and the police were there. These sober living facilities should be closer to downtown and not in the middle of family neighborhood. We don't let our children play as much outside because we never know who may be coming and going from that house.

KAREN PESKO,
Huntington Beach, California.

I see that they have changed the name from Halfway Houses to Sober Living Homes.

I am against having these homes in residential areas. The people in these homes are either alcoholics or drug addicts. If they go "off the rails" they could potentially be a danger to innocent people. Let's take, for example, a recovering alcoholic living in a residential area. One day he/she gets upset and can't stop from drinking. He or she gets into their car drunk, in the residential neighborhood, and drives. In the drunken state, they have the potential to kill, adults and children. I'm sure your argument will be that drugs and alcohol are not allowed in the residences, but where there is a will there is a way! That won't stop them.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

My solution for the halfway house situation is for the addiction centers that currently treat these individuals to also build housing within the zoned business area where they are located.

LINDA HICKS,
Huntington Beach, California.

The presence of unregulated Sober Living Homes in our city has negatively impacted our residential communities. These unregulated businesses recruit and attract addicts requiring professional treatment for their issues and have no accountability for adequately providing necessary care for their clients. Residential areas, such as my neighborhood in Huntington Beach, are overrun with multiple such "homes" that bring additional crime, traffic, noise and nuisance to our peaceful communities. One of my neighbors, whom lives next door to a SLH, has reported active drug dealing on the front lawn of the house, in the presence of his minor children. These SLH are businesses profiting from loopholes in government oversight regulations that have robbed our communities and our citizens of our peace, in our own homes. Law abiding citizens and neighbors living in our residential communities should not have to co-exist and tolerate "businesses" that are operating under the radar of the law, in our own homes. Business should be located in areas zoned for business operations, not in residential neighborhoods. Please restore the peace and tranquility of our communities by eliminating SLH from our residential communities.

KRISTINE KOCH,
Huntington Beach, California.

Dear Congressman Rohrabacher, my family and I have seen the negative impact from influx of unlicensed sober living homes in our neighborhood. Common effects are loitering transients, public intoxication, public drug use and littering of used paraphernalia, prostitution, petty theft including stealing of packages on doorsteps, breaking into cars and at times residents homes.

I have been a resident of Orange County, California since 1979 and a resident of Costa Mesa since 1999. I can say firsthand the deterioration of Costa Mesa is evident the past 19 years. As a father three children and homeowner I strongly encourage action by our government to resolve and/or prevent of unlicensed sober living homes in our city and county. If this does not occur, then I like other similar families will look to relocate and raise our children in a safer, crimeless environment.

GRAHAM SHUTE,
Costa Mesa, California.

There is Sober Living home that opened on my street. I don't know why they're pretending to be a sober living home because they've already found a bag of heroin not far from the house. This house is located two doors down from a public middle school. Hundreds of kids walked by the house and or are dropped off in front of this house daily. This such facility has no business in a family community. Neighbors complain that there has been strange people coming in and out of the house. Two of those strange people were knocking on resident doors and even jumped the fence and went into one of their backyards and walked into their house when they were being chased by the police. I believe sober living homes have no business in residential neighborhoods because they are bringing down the quality of life and safety for the residences around them.

GINA WALTERS,
Huntington Beach, California.

We have lived in our current residence on [REDACTED] for the past 16 years. It has

been an outstanding neighborhood to live in and raise our 3 children. Unfortunately, our peaceful little neighborhood has experienced a drastic change in recent months with the unwelcome addition of a sober living house right down the street. Since the arrival of the occupants, we have experienced a few notable incidents with the most recent being a few individuals that apparently were doing drugs around the corner and were quickly pursued by the Huntington Beach Police Department. This led to the individuals fleeing through multiple backyards and actually entering a residence in an attempt to hide from the police. The individuals were caught on video at one of our neighbor's houses which showed them moving around the perimeter of the residence as they were attempting to hide from the authorities. During that evening, the residents right next door to the sober living house were holding a sleepover for 8 young girls in their backyard. This is a little too close for comfort. In addition, there is a middle school located less than 100 yards from the sober living home and is in the direct foot travel path of children walking home from school. It is our understanding that the transient nature of these sober living houses will introduce new residents every 8 weeks. This means a whole new set of problems will rotate through every 2 months. For the safety of our children, the children at our local schools, and the safety of our own properties I am requesting action to be taken to place stricter oversight on the introduction of sober living houses allowed in residential neighborhoods and if possible limit the number of them being implemented. We have a serious problem here in California with criminals being released early due to budget reductions being placed on our correctional facilities and the good tax paying citizens of this state have to deal with that fallout. We need effective changes that protect our neighborhoods and our kids.

STEVE TRESKES,
Huntington Beach, California.

I grew up in a State Legislator's home, growing up as a Wolcott (Raymond Oliver Wolcott was my Grandfather, John B. Wolcott, his son, raised me). I had a decent upbringing. Later in life, I was ill prepared for my daughter's death from S.I.D.S. or crib death. She was 4.5 months old. My drinking and marijuana usage escalated to a point where I simply could not contain it. Mercifully, I discovered sobriety. So did the mother of our daughter. We were told by numerous doctors that getting pregnant again was improbable (as she had three living kids and previous problematic pregnancies before I met her) yet imagine our surprise to the birth of fraternal twin girls. No in vitro or otherwise modern birth science, just a sobriety miracle in our eyes. My twins are 19 and currently they're enrolled at a junior college in the Texas A&M School System. I am very certain sobriety and sober living assisted them in their development. Although I am divorced and have had three relapses, I also have had twenty two years of sober time in my life.

I have a brief attached for a "Christian-sober living" that may appear rather convoluted, however its main highlights are: have events scheduled to keep residents away from the home (so as to minimize riffraff from visitors), cash and carry instead of billable to insurance (No cash on site method of payment), and a giving back mentality with nurses or doctors that are on call with on staff managers and graduates who need their hours tallied before accreditation. Thank You.

DEDER BARNES,
Huntington Beach, California.

HONORING THE 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE OHIO CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

HON. JAMES B. RENACCI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 19, 2018

Mr. RENACCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Ohio Contractors Association, an organization of more than 500 members involved in Ohio's heavy, highway and utility industry, which turned 100 years on October 10, 2018. Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, OCA is a recognized voice for needed transportation funding, rational regulatory and legislative accountability, workforce development, improving construction practices and relationship building within the industry.

While OCA has grown in membership, its mission, although expanded, can be traced to its origin when 50 contractors across the state signed an agreement to form the association. The first meeting of the "Ohio Road Contractors' Association" was October 10, 1918 in Columbus, Ohio. That initial meeting not only adopted a resolution to drop "Road" from its name and become the Ohio Contractors Association, it also created and individually voted upon the acceptances of 10 sections of its constitution.

Today, more than 200 Contractor Members and 300 Associate Members provide support, unity and leadership to Ohio's heavy, highway and utility industry. OCA maintains its statewide relevance through its nine, Ohio local chapters. Chapter events in combination with statewide committees, events and publications assure that members have the opportunity to provide input and interact with OCA staff so the association remains aware of the issues and concerns of its members and can represent them in a meaningful way. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize an organization that has and continues to lead the heavy-highway and utility construction industry in Ohio.

HONORING IRMALEE SCHUMACHER WITH CALIFORNIA'S THIRD DISTRICT WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

HON. JOHN GARAMENDI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 19, 2018

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Irmalee Schumacher as a woman of the year. She is a sensational educator and dedicated volunteer who has long devoted herself to the betterment of Colusa County. As a teacher for Williams Elementary School and Colusa Preschool, Ms. Schumacher's passion for shaping young minds has been an inspiration to her students and fellow educators. Over the past 21 years, she has led and coordinated the Super Seven Awards Program which recognizes the top seven 11th and 12th grade students from Colusa High School for their outstanding scholastic achievement. Ms. Schumacher takes the time to write each student a highly individualized biography to present to them at their awards dinner where her attention to detail and light-hearted touch always manage to bring the event to life. Furthermore, Ms. Schumacher has been instrumental in coordinating and executing the