



Statement to the City of Costa Mesa.

Good evening Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Staff,

My name is Brandon Stump and I am the founder of The Ohio House, a sober living community here in Costa Mesa. I appreciate the opportunity to share my story, my business's history, and why I believe our presence here is both valuable and essential to the fabric of this city. I never set out to work in mental health or addiction recovery. My journey into this field started with my own personal recovery. When I moved to Costa Mesa from Ohio, friends back home noticed how I had changed my life. They wanted to follow the same path I had taken. Out of a genuine desire to help, I invited them into my home. What started as a simple act of generosity quickly grew into something much larger. More people wanted help, and what began informally in my living room grew into The Ohio House. The name came from friends jokingly calling my place "the Ohio House," and it stuck. Over time, I realized that not only was I good at supporting others in recovery, but the people who lived with us were truly changing their lives.

Investment in Costa Mesa

As this mission grew, I made a serious commitment to this City. I invested more than seven million dollars in real estate on the Eastside of Costa Mesa. At the time of these purchases, there were no restrictions regarding the proximity of sober living homes. It was only later that the City passed an ordinance requiring a 650-foot separation between homes. Because the City first granted a permit to another home 550 away from my homes -- something I had no control over -- the new rule directly impacted the properties I had already purchased in good faith. It is important to note that my decision to invest here was not just about business. Costa Mesa became my home. I own a house on Costa Mesa Street, where I live with my fiancée, whose daughter attends school here. My brother and business partner also lives in Costa Mesa, on Santa Isabella Street, with his wife and their two-year-old daughter, who also goes to school locally. We are not outsiders coming in to take from this community — we are neighbors, homeowners, taxpayers, and fully invested in the wellbeing of Costa Mesa. Beyond financial investment, our work at The Ohio House has contributed something even more valuable: hope. We provide a safe, structured, and supportive environment for people who are serious about rebuilding their lives. Every day, we witness individuals transform from hopelessness to stability, from addiction to employment, from isolation to reuniting with their families. Our homes are well-maintained and professionally managed. We hold ourselves to high standards of care and accountability. We work hard to ensure that our presence enhances the neighborhoods we're part of, rather than detracting from them. Many of our graduates go on to become productive, responsible community members themselves — renters, homeowners, employees, and even business owners right here in Costa Mesa.



Costa Mesa has a long history as a place where recovery thrives. People come here because of the strong recovery community, and our City has a national reputation as a place where people can turn their lives around. The Ohio House is a part of that legacy. If our homes are forced to close or relocate due to an ordinance that came after our investments were made, it doesn't just affect me or my family. It affects the dozens of men who currently live in our houses, the staff we employ, the local businesses we support, and the families who depend on their loved ones having a safe place to recover. We are not asking for special treatment. We are simply asking for recognition of the fact that we invested here in good faith before the ordinance was enacted, and that our presence in Costa Mesa is not only legal but beneficial to the community. In closing, I want to emphasize that I came into this work because I wanted to help people. I stayed because I saw lives changing in ways that were profound and lasting. And I invested deeply in Costa Mesa because this city felt like home — not just for me, but for the people who needed a safe, supportive place to build a new life. I respectfully ask that the City of Costa Mesa recognize the value of The Ohio House and allow us to continue operating here. We are not just a business; we are part of this community. We are homeowners, taxpayers, and parents. And most importantly, we are an organization that helps people find hope and a future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandon Stump



Good Evening Commissioners,

My name is Ryan Stump, Co-Founder of The Ohio House. I am a father, husband, brother, son, and proud resident of Costa Mesa. For nearly 15 years, The Ohio House has been a safe haven for thousands of men fighting for their lives against substance abuse and mental illness. Tonight, I come before you because our very existence in this city is on the line. And yet, outside these chambers, America faces the deadliest addiction and mental health crisis in our history. The National Institute of Health reports that nearly **1 in 4 adults struggles with mental illness or substance abuse**. In a city of roughly 100,000 adults, that means more than **23,000 of our neighbors** are in need. Against that reality, why would Costa Mesa work to eliminate one of the few programs proven to save lives?

Addiction does not discriminate. It impacts doctors, lawyers, students, entrepreneurs, and even public servants. It has touched nearly every family in this city. And yet, instead of being supported, recovery programs and sober living have been targeted, vilified, and driven out. The City has spent millions of taxpayer dollars attacking sober living and aftercare — money that could have been invested in real solutions. Programs like The Ohio House should be celebrated, not scapegoated.

We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal treatment under the law. The laws that protect people with disabilities from housing discrimination require a city to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities — including those in recovery. The California Attorney General has gone on record: “ordinances that restrict sober living are unlawful and harmful.”

The Ohio House has always opened our doors to scrutiny. We have always been transparent. The City has reviewed our program and operations. We have operated responsibly, openly, and in good faith. The question is — has the City treated us in good faith? For nine years, I have sought a real conversation with Costa Mesa leadership. Instead, this hearing is the best I could do. So why? Why have you approved more massage parlors than Ohio Houses? Why more weed dispensaries than Ohio Houses? Why are the leaders in our community isolating, chastising, and institutionalizing those in recovery?

If you deny this appeal, more than 40 men in early recovery will be displaced. They will lose their stability, their community, and their best chance at success. Relapse, homelessness, and despair will follow — and Costa Mesa will bear that cost. But if you grant this reasonable accommodation, you will affirm that Costa Mesa stands on the side of law, compassion, and human dignity.



The war against recovery homes like the Ohio House must end. Our city should not be in the business of eliminating solutions during a national crisis — it should be leading the way in supporting them.

I respectfully but firmly urge you: grant this appeal. Let The Ohio House continue doing what we have done for 15 years — saving lives, supporting families, and serving this city.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Ryan Stump
Co-Founder, The Ohio House