



January 3, 2024

Dear Snyder, Union, Montour and Northumberland County Commissioners:

On behalf of the Recovery Church and The Lighthouse Recovery Home located in Sunbury; I am writing to express my full support for the Susquehanna Valley Community Education Project. After reviewing their extensive business plan and meeting with their leadership we see an incredible opportunity for the people we work with to benefit from this project.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health recorded 5,146 deaths from drug overdose in 2022. That means 14 people, on average died every day in our state from an overdose. And we know that in 2023 that number has drastically increased. I think we can all agree that drug addiction has become an epidemic even in our local communities. As we work, day in and day out to provide resources and help to those struggling to find freedom from their addiction we can identify that long-term education and assistance are necessary for someone to not only survive their addiction but thrive in life. We see the Susquehanna Valley Community Education Project as a missing piece to the puzzle to combat this drug epidemic. After an individual gets sober, they require consistent accountability in a long-term situation. This is why we opened our sober living facility to see people find lasting sobriety and become functioning members of society. The one thing still missing is giving them purpose and opportunity to succeed. This comes in a variety of ways, but we believe furthering education is at the top of the list. Giving them a skill and a degree will not only build self-confidence but create motivation and security for their future. Instead of being a drain on our economy by getting caught in the revolving door of drug rehabs and jail; we will see these individuals graduate to earn higher wages which then contributes to their regional tax base. This would also have a positive impact on local employers. But they must first be given the opportunity, which is where you all come in. Your sponsorship of a regional Susquehanna Valley Community College opens opportunity for those in recovery to maintain the consistency and discipline they've acquired during treatment court and carry it into their classes and eventual career path.

We believe with urgency that a community college in our region would open doors to not only address the drug epidemic here in our valley but also create opportunities to impact our economy as well as the families in the communities you serve. As someone in recovery myself, I can speak on behalf of this community and say with full assurance that having the option to attend a

local community college would be life-changing for anyone seeking sobriety and freedom from drug addiction or alcoholism. I believe we would see a complete shift in our county resources as people who were once part of the jail or rehabilitation systems become graduates that will now obtain gainful employment, paying taxes, and living as contributing members of society, no longer a burden to the community, but an asset.

Let us all work together to formulate a solution that will open the door for the Susquehanna Valley Community Education Project to provide the education, experience, resources and hope that so many in our valley are desperately seeking.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Pastor Billy Robel, CRS

Recovery Church Pastor/The Lighthouse Director

212 Walnut St

Sunbury, PA 17801

(570)284-8373

billy.robel@cwv.life