

House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
FY 2024 Public Witness Testimony
Statement of Trevor Jacobs, treatment court graduate, Kentucky
On behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals
April 10, 2023

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Cartwright, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 1.5 million graduates of treatment court programs and the 150,000 people these programs will connect to lifesaving addiction and mental health treatment this year. Given the ongoing substance use disorder crisis, I request that Congress provide level funding of \$95 million for the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and \$35 million for the Veterans Treatment Court Grant Program at the Department of Justice for fiscal year 2024.

My name is Trevor Jacobs, and I am a proud husband, stepfather, small business owner, counselor, and government employee. I am also a grateful Knott County, Kentucky Drug Court graduate who will celebrate 15 years in recovery this summer.

My life looked very different back in 2007. I was in active addiction with little hope of change. In high school I had no desire to use drugs even when I was offered the opportunity. But in my thirties, a few doses of Oxycontin that I had thought would be harmless had turned into a 100 dollar a day habit that I supported by stealing and forging checks. My life spiraled out of control and soon, for the first time in my life, I was facing felony charges.

The trajectory of my life balanced on one question my attorney asked me: “Do you want to beat [the charges] or do you want to get better?” I wanted to get better. But all my past efforts to do so had failed. I had tried treatment multiple times, but recovery never stuck because I had no accountability. Luckily, my family never lost hope in me, and neither did the team at the Knott County Adult Drug Court. That program is what finally made the difference in my life.

Drug court was initially intimidating, and it was much harder than I’d expected it would be. The court held me accountable in a way I’d never been before, balancing toughness with support and encouragement. Judge Childers had high standards for her court’s participants—but she was also fair. And I had a whole multi-disciplinary team behind me; not just Judge Childers, but the attorneys, the supervisor, law enforcement, treatment providers—everyone was on my side. Participation in drug court also includes giving back to the community; distributing food boxes, raising money for Relay for Life, and picking up trash in public spaces were just a few ways I gave back to my community through the program. Service like this helps those in recovery take pride in themselves.

Drug court helped me find sustained, long-term recovery—I’ve been sober since August 2008 and graduated from the program in 2009. Thanks to Judge Childers and the team, I was able to mend my relationships and focus on my family again. I became a SAMHSA-certified peer recovery support specialist, and for a number of years worked in the very same drug court that

changed my life. In 2016, I married my wife Tonya and gained not only a life-partner, but a whole family through the blessing of her—now *our*—three kids. I currently work for the Knott County Housing Authority managing 81 households and have a small food truck business on the side with Tonya. My life in recovery has allowed me to reconnect with my passion for woodworking, and put me in a position to help others who are struggling. After fifteen years, it feels good to say that now I have been a strong asset to my community for longer than I was in active addiction.

I am just one example of how funding treatment courts, like drug courts and veterans treatment courts, not only helps one person, but uplifts a whole community. Drug courts offer a ripple effect of hope. And support from the Department of Justice has helped start thousands of courts over the years, while ensuring they follow evidence-based standards that ensure fidelity to the proper model. The largest and most comprehensive independent multisite study to date found that drug courts reduce crime by up to 58% and save, on average, up to \$6,000 per participant. Additional benefits were found to include increases in employment, education, family functioning, and financial stability.

Drug courts and veterans treatment courts are vitally important as our nation continues to battle the addiction crisis and its impact on communities like mine around the country. Investment in these programs helps state and local leaders increase their capacity to address the crisis from a public safety and public health standpoint. This funding will help thousands of individuals break the cycle of crime and addiction, begin a life in recovery, and become productive members of their communities.

I strongly urge this committee to recommend \$95 million for the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and \$35 million for the Veterans Treatment Court Grant Program at the Department of Justice for fiscal year 2024, so these programs can continue help people break cycles, find long-term recovery, and become healthy members of their communities.