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## **Alcohol treatment centers face funding issues**

By: Jessica Watson & Web Staff

Homeless men addicted to drugs or alcohol are turning their lives around. They're sobering up with the help of others at recovery centers.



A new bill could cut spending to treatment centers

A bill up for debate in the State House could force local ABC boards, which help fund centers, to cut spending, leaving less money to keep them open.

"This place is really important to me," recovering alcoholic Randy Steward said. "It saved my life. It gave me a life."

Randy Steward is a recovering alcoholic. For years, he was homeless and wandered from city to city, living in the woods, and continued to drink. The cycle ended the night a car struck him and almost killed him. That is when he came to the Healing Place.

"The majority of the program is geared to getting men off the street, getting them sobered up, getting them through this program and then turning them around so they are working, tax paying citizens," Healing Place Program Manager Chris Budnick said.

The Healing Place receives half of its funding from Wake County's local ABC board. There is a bill set to hit the House floor that would cut local ABC operation costs by 10 percent. The proposal is to use that money to help fund alcohol law enforcement, a state agency. If the bill is enacted, centers like the Healing Place who depend on local support may suffer.

"Without that money we wouldn't exist," Budnick said. "It costs \$25 a day to provide services to a man here. It would mean that they would be going to more expensive places to sober up like jails and emergency departments."

But not all members in the House agree with taking local money to cushion the needs of the state.

"The local counties taking their own money and being forced to send it to Raleigh, sounds like taxation without representation," Rep. Bob Hensley said. "Here we go again with the Boston tea party."

The decision still lies in the hands of the House as to where the money will end up this year. Stewart hopes whatever that decision may be, it will leave the services available that he used to begin a new life.

"They need places like this, they really do," Stewart said.

If a bill is passed, it will be up each county's ABC board where they will cut their costs.