

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

**Written Testimony of Rob Bovett
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before the
Senate Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation Committee**

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Senators Dembrow, Gelser Blouin, Heard, Linthicum, and Manning,

For the record I'm Rob Bovett. As I think most of you know, I've been involved with drug policy at local, state, national, and international levels for a few decades, with a particular emphasis on evidence-informed prevention, enforcement, treatment and recovery support, and harm reduction, both individual and community. My career has focused heavily on creating, implementing, and running programs in our justice system to divert people suffering from addiction and/or mental health issues. Think drug courts, HOPE, mental health courts, veteran's courts, and justice reinvestment. I continue that work through my role as Vice-Chair of our Criminal Justice Commission.

I'm also a member of the Stanford Network on Addiction Policy - or SNAP for short. We are a group of drug policy folks that focus on evidence-informed solutions to drug policy challenges.

As you know, Oregon's addiction and overdose numbers didn't look very good before COVID and Ballot Measure 110 - and now look even worse. There are many causes - many of which go well beyond this informational hearing - but one of those is addiction itself. As a result, I thought it might be a good idea if we had a conversation about how our current policies address that issue. But I'm no expert on addiction. Domestic and international precursor controls related to meth and opioids, sure. But the brain science of addiction, not as much. The good news is that SNAP has a number of addiction experts and two of them are here to get this conversation started.

I realize there are many diverging views on what drug policy should look like in Oregon. I think it's important that we have an open conversation around those issues. As I tell students at the beginning of each semester, please interrogate what you are told about drug policy - we all have our biases. I think it's important that we try to do just that - make sure that our own ideological lens does not blind us to evidence that doesn't fit our preferred narrative. It's been my experience that the best policy outcomes occur when policymakers consider a diversity of views.

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you this morning, and I'd like to now turn it over to Todd Korthuis, head of addiction medicine here at OHSU, and then Keith Humphreys, SNAP's leader and someone whom I had the privilege of working with on drug policy during the Bush and Obama Administrations.