

Greeting Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nico Serra, I'm a mostly white passing, mixed race, queer and transgender person with disabilities. I am a former licensed school teacher and wilderness therapy field instructor. Between teaching in public schools and working as a guide at the recovery treatment center, I spent about 10 years working with young adults and teenagers. I currently work with Elders, people with disabilities, the sick and other oppressed individuals with an emphasize on Black and brown communities. Most of my time is spent supporting community members to find and maintain accessible affordable housing, equitable healthcare, care worker support and navigate various state and federal systems.

As I work with people with disabilities, it is obvious to me that addiction is a health concern and deserves to be treated as such, not as a criminal issue. By fully funding ballot measure 110 Oregon could save extensive resources and most importantly, profoundly improve the lives of many people, especially Black, brown and poor white people while keeping them out of the criminal systems. Independent government research released by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission found that disparities in drug arrests and convictions will nearly be eliminated through the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act. Specifically the report found:

- Racial disparities in drug arrests will drop by 95%;
- Convictions of Black and Indigenous Oregonians will drop by 94%;
- “This drop in convictions will result in fewer collateral consequences stemming from criminal justice system involvement, which include difficulties in finding employment, loss of access to student loans for education, difficulties in obtaining housing, restrictions on professional licensing, and others,” the report says.
- The actual reduction of disparities could be even more dramatic. “Other disparities can exist at different stages of the criminal justice process, including inequities in police stops, jail bookings, bail, pretrial detention, prosecutorial decisions, and others.”

As a state, Oregon collectively can and should do this work, the voters mandated it. We have the resources through the Cannabis tax and only need to align our priorities to match them. Fully funding this ballot measure will create a tangible way for underserved communities that have been brutalized by systems of oppression to literally recover themselves and move on. And once people find recovery they often find ways to help others. I know this from personal experience as I am in long term recovery myself and can personally attest to the difference having healthcare, housing and other supportive services and people has made in my life. It is for these reasons and so many others, I urge you to approve the necessary budget to fully implement ballot measure 110 through the passage of SB 755. Thank you for receiving my testimony.

Your thoughtful consideration of this matter is appreciated,
Nico Serra