

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

Today, one in three adults in the U.S. has a criminal record of some sort, including drug charges. They face education, legal, housing and job barriers making it hard for anyone to succeed. Why should anyone be defined by past mistakes?

Nearly 71% of Americans believe that people should have the chance to right their wrongs. What that tells me is that 71% percent of Americans understand that people fall on hard times, make bad decisions, become addicts and 71% realize that those who do, deserve the chance to prove themselves. They deserve a chance to become active members of society.

I have personally seen many of my son's friends in recovery and still struggling because of drug charges. They have problems finding jobs and housing. They can't go to school because of drug charges. This makes it nearly impossible for them to succeed, keeping them in poverty. They are being punished for the mistakes that were made in their late teens and early 20s.

My son, Bodhi Phelps, received a drug charge when he was 19. Stop court kept him from getting a full-time job. The fees that were attached to the program kept him struggling. He couldn't find a job or housing. He had numerous job offers until they saw his drug charges. The he was denied the job. He became depressed and using seemed like the only out for him. Can you blame him? From his perspective he never thought he would get out of the mistakes he made years before. The program set him up for failure.

Bodhi was working on his fourth year with the program when he was killed May 24, 2016 by Gresham Police. He ran from the police that night because he had a warrant and didn't want to go jail and detox. Detoxing from heroin in jail is barbaric. He would have to show up to court throwing up and having diarrhea. So sick he could hardly walk. Had he not been in the Stop Court program, he wouldn't have run, because he hadn't done anything wrong that night. He would still be alive, with me, today. All Bodhi wanted was a chance and the system continually failed him. As a parent, this is so painful to watch. As a mother, who lost her son because he ran afraid of going to jail, this is beyond painful. Our children need a chance to overcome their past mistakes and make a life for themselves. Too many lives will be affected in the next 18 months if we do not allow this measure to do what it was intended too.

This measure was intended to allow the past to be the past and give people the chance to move forward and succeed. I ask you, in memory of my son Bodhi Phelps, please support Senate Bill 755, and fulfill the promise of Measure 110.

Sincerely,
Shiloh Phelps
Cofounder, Pacific Northwest Family Circle
Mother of 22-year-old Loved One Bodhi Phelps