

Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response,

You cannot criminalize a public health crisis and expect results. Prohibition is an abject failure and we dump more money down the toilet every year just paying people to worship the problem.

Addressing drug abuse requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the need for housing, healthcare and jobs. Jamming more people into prisons just turns us into a carceral hellhole.

Start creating more incentives for people to train and become nurses and specialists in Oregon and then STAY in Oregon. Give doctors a tax break. Whatever it takes to take care of our people.

Recriminalization is the stupidest response to an issue that was in part caused by overly severe criminal punishments for what is, at heart, a healthcare issue. A drug user and even a small-time dealer has a much better chance of being a contributing member of society going forward if they don't have a felony record holding them back from job opportunities. These people aren't murderers, they're trying to fill a hole with whatever's available to them and we've created a society where the only help they can access is drugs because we've defunded everything else.

I am reaching out to you to call for real solutions, real safety, and real healing when it comes to addressing the overdose and addiction crisis. Leaders need to do more - and fast - to address the crisis in our community. They need to finally provide the housing, drug treatment, and mental health care that people need and voters have overwhelmingly supported. We also need to move beyond scare tactics and fear mongering. Controversial and divisive proposals to repeal Measure 110 are not the answer.

We shouldn't expect the police to solve social problems like mental illness, homelessness, or addiction — and we cannot arrest our way out of these problems.

It's time for solutions that let mental health and drug treatment professionals help people who need and want treatment, reducing waiting lists and lines for detox services and not returning to the harmful war on drugs that disproportionately impacted Black and Brown Oregonians.

We know the real solution is to expand access to treatment services and I urge the committee to focus on helping and healing our communities.

Sincerely,
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