

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

I am reaching out to you to urge you not to recriminalize drugs in Oregon. Oregon has spent several decades with criminalized drug use, and all 49 other states have criminalize drug use, and yet that have proven it self to be a failed policy both here and other states for decades!

Politicians couldn't be counted on to have the courage to pass a bold solution, even though it is evidence-based, so voters fixed this by decriminalizing drugs and dedicating tens of millions of dollars to substance abuse and mental health treatment. And yet those dollars have not been quickly and effectively spent! It is too soon to call what voters did a failure. To repeal it too soon and return to a policy that has failed for decades is nonsensical.

Look, I get it. People who have to get elected often lack the courage to pass real solutions, for fear of voter backlash. But you didn't pass this policy; voters did! Implement it fully, give it time, and build on it!

I know it is frustrating to see what is happening on the streets. (Remember that drug use in public is still illegal in Oregon, so criminalizing private use isn't a real solution to that. Its a cowardly talking point, at best.) The things that increased those problems are mostly economic. Most houseless people - and almost all newly-houseless people - are houseless because of economic issues, not substance use. Most houseless people use drugs to make houselessness more tolerable; they aren't houseless because of drugs.

Studies have shown that if you give houseless poeple \$11,000 lump sum of money, they find housing, decrease substance use by 43%, and have \$1,000 left over at the end of the year. That \$11,000 is a heck of a lot cheaper than what we currently spend to house each person now, which we don't do on a large enough scale. But the fact that when you solve the economic issue with the \$11,000 lump sum, they find housing and use less substances all on their own, shows that substances aren't the cause of houselessness; houselessness is the cause of substance use and econmics is the cause of houselessness. So if you want to solve the problem, fix the economics! Of course, if you had the votes to fix the economic causes of houselessness, you would have by now. Without an economic solution, houselessness will be just as bad under recriminalization, including 2-4 years from now while you are running for reelction.

Voters passed the real solution to substance abuse and found the dearly needed funds to increase access to mental health services. We will not tolerate politicians who overturn our will and repeal the voters' real solution and replace it with a fake and failed solution. If you recriminalize drugs, things won't get any better. How will it feel running for re-election with the same problem, due to a fake and cowardly solution YOU passed? Curious what your pitch will be under those circumstances to the voters who passed the real solution that you repealed.

So, if you want to solve problems and get reelected, make sure substance abuse and mental health treatment dollars are spent effectively, and push for economic solutions for houselessness. In 2-4 years, there can be tangible progress on the streets that voters see, if you pass real solutions now.

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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