

Dear Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and Members of the Committee:

Oregonians deserve real healing, real safety, and real solutions to drug addiction and overdose deaths. Our leaders must do more to address the crisis in our communities, but regressing back to failed drug war policies is not the answer.

This is a very personal topic for me

I was an alcoholic for most of my adult life. As long as I was able to maintain my job, home life and health then I continued with this lifestyle.. One by one Al of those shipped away from me. I became a two hour drunk. Meaning that my body would wake me up every two hours to "feed this empty shell of a body alcohol" as I called it. I was arrested many times due to public drunkenness and hospitalized for suicide attempts yet no one showed me that alcohol was to blame for all those issues. When I was sick and tired of being sick and tired I finally quit drinking. I had to WANT it. Nothing could have stopped me before this. I have seen so many addicts get clean and off the streets now working and functioning in society. This is because they have had enough and they wanted it. IMO the only, ONLY way an addict will recover is their desire to quit.

Criminal penalties for people suffering from addiction disproportionately jails Black and Brown Oregonians and hurts people who are struggling. Courts are not qualified to determine whether or not a person needs drug treatment, nor should we force people into treatment when they are not ready to be successful in their recovery.

We deserve real solutions. Oregonians need housing, drug treatment, and mental health care -- and the needs are urgent. We must expand services so that people who want mental health and drug treatment can get it, and we need to reduce waiting lists and lines for detox services.

Handcuffs and jail cells cannot solve behavioral and public health problems like mental illness, homelessness, or addiction. I urge the committee to focus on helping our communities with real solutions that help people heal.

Sincerely,

Wendy Watson
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