

Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community

Oregonians were clear when we voted overwhelmingly for Measure 110 in 2020. Addiction must be addressed with treatment and support, not punishment and jail.

We need lawmakers to continue building the drug treatment system Oregonians need, rather than revert to harmful strategies that do not make us safer or address the root causes of addiction, crime, and homelessness.

Policies that include forced treatment and arresting people with addictions haven't worked in the past and won't start working now. Instead, they deepen stigmas and isolate Oregonians who most need our help. Jail and prison time typically worsen drug use and overdoses, and criminal records create additional barriers to housing, education, and jobs.

I am ANGRY at the glacial pace Oregon has moved creating the addiction recovery infrastructure promised by 110. Whether it is due to corruption or incompetence I don't care. You need to get your proverbial butts in gear. Give the auditor power to make changes and punish people or something if needed. On the other hand, if things ARE being done, you need to get the word out in an effective way. Americans are impatient creatures and are predisposed from generations of mass incarceration to throw their problems into a human rights hole to fester rather than have to look at them.

How is it that we can commit decades to building out costly prison infrastructure including training incentives for worker training quickly and effectively for decades, but can't dedicate more than 3 years to trying something different when it turns out the incarceration approach was a slow cancer on society? The fact that we are even considering going back to the system we had before 2020, as if the addiction crisis didn't exist before then is INSANE and possibly evidence of a general memory problem in the American people. I remember the crisis at the time being bigger than it ever was. Almost as if being tough on drugs since the 70s did absolutely nothing or was incredibly inadequate.

People need to be able to see a visible change rather quickly. A lot of the voting populous are those who hate to see suffering and become indignant about the slow pace and will change things drastically in poorly thought out ways and hinder progress that way. Another portion of us are those who are fearful or annoyed by the presence of seemingly unstable people who have no access to homes or sanitation facilities and hate being constantly asked for money. Some of those don't care if the solution to the problem is to violate human rights. Some people are all of the above.

We need to see progress or mass awareness of major actions in order to maintain their support.

I don't mind you putting some enforcement power behind 110. I know you can't force people into addiction recovery if they are not ready for it. So don't bother trying. But I do think if you created monitored safe use sites, you could add some sort of encouragement or incentive to use in those rather than on the street. The real benefit to the user is important here. But also important is getting the user out of the public eye while high, training so they are less likely to die of an OD on the street, and keeping the streets clearer of paraphernalia.

Honestly if I could get rid of the trash cleanup funding line below I would. But I want to take advantage of the system the ACLU has built to distribute this to every relevant lawmaker. We have enough programs for cleanup already and if we implemented safe use sites the need for that would go down. Trash cleanup is NOT where I want more money put. Unless you call safe use sites trash cleanup because it reduces the trash on the streets preemptively.

As one of your constituents, I am counting on you to lead with evidence-based health policies and Oregon values, not fear and stigma. Oregonians do not want false promises from our elected leaders that worsen the drug addiction crisis in our communities and make it more difficult and expensive to solve.

Please focus on strengthening Measure 110, increasing access to voluntary treatment, and funding trash clean-up and neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Sincerely,

Louise Cornelius