

December 4, 2023

Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony on Addiction and Community Safety

Co-Chair Kropf, Co-Chair Lieber, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. My name is Yvonne Garcia, my pronouns are she/her. I am a staff member at the ACLU of Oregon, but in this testimony, I'm providing my personal thoughts and reflections and not a statement on behalf of the ACLU of Oregon,

More than twenty years ago, I started my career as a social worker providing services to those experiencing homelessness, drug addiction and mental illness. I did this work in Arizona then here in Oregon when I moved here in 2004.

It was clear back then as it should be now that the resources needed by our most vulnerable neighbors should include affordable housing, health care, access to treatment, transitional support, and ongoing access to these resources.

Criminalizing drug use does not work and more importantly, incarceration harms people and communities. Our criminal justice system is overloaded and costly. Those coming out of jail or prison are in no better position to land on their feet and often face a higher risk of overdose upon release. This is not caring for our fellow Oregonians.

Please commit and fund the solutions that are most impactful - affordable housing, treatment, and ongoing support to help any individual struggling with drug addiction and mental illness. These data driven identified solutions not only support the individual in need but also creates a stronger and healthier community for all of us. Let's strive for solutions that lead us to becoming a more caring Oregon.

Thank you,
Yvonne Garcia