

Dear Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Committee,

I am writing to call for real solutions, real safety, real healing.

When I first learned that measure 110, decriminalizing small amounts of drugs, passed the Oregon vote, I was excited to see the state take a health-based and empathetic approach to helping people recover from addiction instead of criminalizing and punishing them. It is concerning to hear that some would like us to return to the FAILED war on drugs.

My name is Taylor and I moved to Portland three years ago from Colorado in part because I was impressed with the state taking action through measure 110. I have professional experience working in transitional housing and domestic violence, helping individuals recover from houselessness, addiction, criminal histories, childhood trauma, mental illness, and more.

The data has been clear: the war of drugs did nothing to solve the addiction and houseless crisis but rather exacerbated the issue. Those who are arrested for minor drug offenses now have a criminal charge that makes it difficult to find housing, jobs, access to health care, etc upon release in a country where accessing these resources is already difficult for many. Arresting someone for a mental health condition does not address the root cause. Time and time again we find that the root causes of criminal activity are poverty and lack of opportunity. We need to focus on addressing these things and improving access to treatment and other basic human rights instead of encouraging a broken criminal justice system.

Over 30 states have a higher overdose rate than Oregon and all of these states have harsher drug laws. The war on drugs is not the solution.

Leaders need to do more - and fast - to address the crisis in our community. They need to finally provide the housing, drug treatment, and health care that people need, deserve, and that 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, houselessness, 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.

I want to thank the committee for the thoughtful approach in addressing the addiction crisis in Oregon.

Best,
Taylor Scott

Sent from my iPhone