

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 Christina Nguyen (she/her). Although I work for the ACLU of Oregon, I am speaking to you in my personal capacity as a community member, a daughter of immigrants, and a new mother to urge you to oppose reverting to a criminal approach to Oregon's addiction crisis.

I can fondly recall weekends spent eating lunch in Chinatown with my parents as a child. Nearly thirty years later, I work in the same neighborhood and it's heartbreaking and impossible to ignore our homeless neighbors' suffering and people struggling with drug addiction.

We do not have time to waste on repeating mistakes of the past. We know that the war on drugs harmed our communities and especially Black and Brown Oregonians. We can't expect or rely on the police to solve social problems like mental illness, homelessness, or addiction — and we cannot arrest our way out of these problems. We must prioritize solutions that allow mental health and drug treatment professionals to help people who need and want treatment, freeing up police to focus on violent crime instead of implementing tactics from a worn out playbook that disproportionately harms Black and Brown communities and our houseless neighbors.

Here and right now, we have the opportunity to do better, to lead and create a better pathway forward. Thank you for your commitment to addressing the addiction crisis in our state. Please do not recriminalize and instead, invest in real solutions that look at the system holistically and prioritize care for all community members.

**Thank you,
Christina Nguyen**