

I work in public defense as a mitigation specialist with a focus on sentencing. Many of my clients are facing drug charges because they themselves suffer from untreated, substance dependency and clinical depression from an assortment of traumatic life experiences. I understand what the goal was with ballot measure 110 which is why I voted for it. HOWEVER—What I wish I had known when I voted for this measure is that the corresponding mental health and wraparound supports that were supposed to come with BM 110 would never materialize.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard a client tell me that if it wasn't for jail they might be dead. That they were on a direct path to an overdose. I know that there are a lot of statistics about how letting the Carceral system deal with the addiction crisis only makes the addiction crisis worse, but it is now evident that absent both a mental health system, as well as a carceral system to prevent people from overdosing is the worst possible solution of all. Our experiment here in Portland bears this out. If we are to proceed with this experiment, we have to make sure that we have a robust universal mental healthcare system with mandatory inpatient rehabilitation treatment available to everyone who is remanded to do so, by a court of law. The way this could work in my opinion is that if anybody is caught breaking a law or ordinance and defense counsel shows that their felony stems from an addiction we empower the court to remand them into mandatory inpatient treatment. I suggest, however, that we suspend this measure 110 experiment until we have built that inpatient drug rehab system out and that in the meantime we work with our Carceral system to make treatment available for people in custody.