



December 4, 2023

**TO:** Members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response

**FR:** Derek Sangston, Oregon Business & Industry

**RE:** Public Comment in Favor of Bold Action on Oregon's Public Safety Crisis

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Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Public Safety Response. For the record, I am Derek Sangston, policy director and counsel for Oregon Business & Industry (OBI).

Oregon Business & Industry (OBI) is a statewide association representing businesses from a wide variety of industries and from each of Oregon's 36 counties. In addition to being the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI is the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Our 1,600 member companies, more than 80% of which are small businesses, employ more than 250,000 Oregonians. Oregon's private sector businesses help drive a healthy, prosperous economy for the benefit of everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Oregon's ongoing public safety and behavioral health crisis. Businesses across Oregon – in communities small and large – encounter the symptoms of this crisis daily. Examples include the open use and sale of drugs, retail theft and property crime, and constant threats to the safety of customers and workers.

As a result, Oregon's businesses have had to bear added costs to clean up and repair damage to their buildings and storefronts, invest in private security, and train employees to keep themselves and customers safe. Businesses also have endured lost revenue due to stolen or damaged products and reduced foot traffic.

One member of OBI reported losing \$9 million to theft in 2022, which was an increase of 21% from only two years earlier. Another OBI member suffered over 9,000 known thefts, 85% of which were evaded. Both companies report experiencing multiple crimes against people per month. While that data is representative of what a larger corporation faces in Oregon, OBI's small business members report they experience relatively similar impacts.

In response, businesses throughout Oregon have made the hard decision to permanently close, relocate offices away from urban cores, and continue work from home policies to keep their employees safe. Until our workers feel safe, asking them to work in Oregon's urban centers will be difficult.

Though Ballot Measure 110 is not the sole cause of the crisis, OBI urges this committee to recognize that it has exacerbated it. In September, OBI convened a listening session attended by chambers of commerce from every corner of Oregon. We appreciate that many of you were able to attend. Throughout the meeting, there were calls to invest in law enforcement, change and

enforce drug laws, help offset the extraordinary costs to businesses, and expand addiction services.

While a successful response will require this committee to determine how each of those calls can complement the others for the greatest results, OBI urges you to take bold action to give law enforcement and local governments the tools they need to combat this crisis during the 2024 session. We simply cannot wait until 2025 and beyond for real solutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

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