

Dear Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and Members of the Committee:

Oregonians deserve real healing, real safety, and real solutions to drug addiction and overdose deaths. Our leaders must do more to address the crisis in our communities, but regressing back to failed drug war policies is not the answer.

I am a family physician who started working in Substance Abuse treatment in 1979. I continued to treat people with substance abuse for the following 40 yrs of practice in primary care. Over 36% (1 in 3) of patients seen in primary care have substance abuse disorder (defined in the DSM-5). The majority of adults with SUD have moderate/severe use disorder.

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdoi.org%2F10.1016%2Fj.drugalcdep.2017.05.048&data=05%7C01%7CJACSR.exhibits%40oregonlegislature.gov%7C53fc03b08bad44cc02e908dbf4f44212%7C489a9c84574a48c7b72a2450511334cc%7C1%7C0%7C638373102150992938%7CUnknwn%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ij1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ScnNbDOWiTlYsdqTQ4x4vSciDMHqrVd7rV%2BOZacQu8%3D&reserved=0>

Are you going to jail that whole 36% of the population? Treatment is a cheaper and better option. Chemical dependency is a disease like heart disease, diabetes, etc. Given appropriate treatment (education, support systems (including housing, employment and mental health treatment when appropriate, medication if appropriate) people can get into recovery and become productive citizens. It's a hard disease to live with. Sometimes people have relapses, but so do people with heart disease and diabetes if they don't follow their treatment plans. These are all chronic diseases that never go away. They require ongoing treatment, education and support. We don't send people who have a second heart attack to jail if they end up in the ED with an acute event.

Criminal penalties for people suffering from addiction disproportionately jails Black and Brown Oregonians and hurts people who are struggling. Courts are not qualified to determine whether or not a person needs drug treatment, nor should we force people into treatment when they are not ready to be successful in their recovery.

We deserve real solutions. Oregonians need housing, drug treatment, and mental health care -- and the needs are urgent. We must expand services so that people who want mental health and drug treatment can get it, and we need to reduce waiting lists and lines for detox services.

Handcuffs and jail cells cannot solve behavioral and public health problems like mental illness, homelessness, or addiction. I urge the committee to focus on helping our communities with real solutions that help people heal.

Sincerely,

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