

Community Law

METROPOLITAN PUBLIC DEFENDER

December 4, 2023

To the Oregon Legislature:

We are attorneys at the Community Law Division at Metropolitan Public Defender. Our division serves thousands of individuals each year who face barriers to housing and employment because of their criminal records. Many of our clients have a history of criminal convictions for drug possession.

In our experience, individuals with convictions for misdemeanor and felony drug possession crimes are severely disadvantaged in fully moving forward with their lives, even after they find sobriety.

First, court fines and fees that attach to misdemeanor and felony convictions can be exorbitant and can keep people in debt for decades, if not a lifetime. Under Oregon law, after several years, an individual can expunge their drug conviction to get it off their record IF they have paid all court fines and fees. Our office sees countless people who are eligible to expunge their records but cannot because they cannot afford to pay what is owed.

Second, Oregon law permits a landlord to deny a rental application for a conviction for drug possession even after the person is sober. Someone can be legally denied indefinitely for a conviction for drug possession, whereas a landlord cannot consider a violation for drug possession when evaluating a housing application.

Lastly, for our clients that have found sobriety, being haunted by their criminal record that reflects their season of living in their addiction takes a psychological toll that cannot be valued. We have seen clients become visibly lighter knowing they can clear their record of their drug convictions and appear on paper who they are today.

In conclusion, Measure 110 has helped thousands of individuals gain housing and employment, enabling their overall success, sobriety, and self-sufficiency. Repealing Measure 110 is a step backwards for Oregon.

Thank you,



Adrienne Del Monte
Attorney



Maggie Powers
Attorney