

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sylvan Cat, I am a resident of Portland Oregon, a member of Portland Drug Users Union, a self identified drug user, and a disabled person. I am writing to you today because I deeply believe that measure 110 was a step in the right direction for the lives of drug users, and all Oregonians. As a drug user, measure 110 has opened up many doors for treatment, and harm reduction services that drug users want and need. In the wake of Measure 110 Portland's Drug Users Union was able to form and build connections with harm reduction orgs to further advocate for drug users. Our union is composed of diverse individuals from around the Portland area, we are BIPOC, disabled people, and LGBTQIA2S+, current users, former users, and allies all advocating to better the lives of people who use drugs. Decriminalization has always been a goal for the union, because decriminalization allows drug users to be free from the harsh punishment that leads us nowhere but into a cycle of incarceration that furthers us away from any sort of recovery. Criminalization leads to housing instability, poverty, and medical neglect.

Measure 110 would allow us to build infrastructure that would allow for safe supply, Overdose Prevention Sites/Safer Consumption Sites, and access to more treatment from caring healthcare professionals that truly understand our needs. Recriminalization would be a devastating step backwards in helping to solve our overdose crisis, and will only lead to an even more unsafe drug supply. No amount of arrests will ever lead to lasting sobriety, and decriminalization is our chance to prove that. The State of Oregon will only benefit from continuing our path forward and investing in harm reduction, and listening to the needs of drug users. As it stands, 32 states have higher overdose rates than Oregon, we cannot blame our overdose crisis on decriminalization. We cannot blame a measure that went in effect at the same time as a pandemic that caused economic recession, housing instability, and tremendous loss of life for what is occurring in our state.

Drug users want access to safe supply, and to overdose prevention sites, two things that can be achieved through decriminalization, and by expanding the funding put in place by Measure 110. Without safe supply, without Overdose Prevention Sites/Safer Consumptions Sites, without harm reduction services, and more treatment services we will continue to have an overdose crisis. With that crisis, people like me and my fellow union members will die at the hands of policy failures. Now is not the time to recriminalize drug use, now is the time to continue to move forward with what measure 110 has built.

I urge you, as a member of Portland's Drug User Union, to not return to the failed drug war that disproportionately affects Indigenous, Black, and People of Color, as well as poor and disabled people. I urge you to maintain decriminalization, and expand funding for the services that we desperately want and need.

Thank you for your time,

Sylvan Cat