

My name is Khanh Le and I am the Executive Director of Unite Oregon. We are a membership organization led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty. We work across Oregon to build a unified, intercultural movement for justice.

Now that Measure 110 is in place, we're seeing critical behavioral health investments in the communities that we serve. Our communities now have access to treatment in their own languages. We're seeing more culturally specific direct outreach to people of color and more access to services for our people when and where they need it. Measure 110 has funded some of Oregon's most critical services, including some of the only behavioral health services people can receive without insurance or a diagnosis. This funding for new services has been critical in getting care to the people we live and work with.

I am aware that we are at a pivotal political moment in how we will move forward as a state in addressing our overdose crisis. I am calling on our leaders to take simple actions to keep our neighbors alive and out of jail. We must invest in more treatment services, more mobile medical units to reach people on the street, more detox and stabilization centers, and more recovery and transitional and permanent housing.

It is abundantly clear that the recriminalization of drug use would take us back to the failed and harmful policies of the War on Drugs and would devastate the communities we serve: people of color, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous Oregonians, and people experiencing poverty.

We know that harsh drug laws don't prevent drug use and addiction: 32 states have higher overdose rates than Oregon, and all of them have harsher drug laws. Locking up people struggling with addiction isn't going to solve the problems we face. To actually solve this issue, we need to focus on affordable housing and expanded mental health and addiction treatment.

We can all agree that we need to take action on our overdose crisis. Housing and treatment are what people need, and voters were clear on that. Here in Oregon, we're not afraid to try something different, so let's lead the nation. Let's say loud and clear that the overdose crisis is a healthcare matter, not a criminal one. We cannot go back. The War on Drugs has harmed our neighbors long enough.

I urge you to reject calls to return to the failed War on Drugs that stole the futures of so many Black and Brown Oregonians. We have the opportunity to do better and we must do better. We cannot wait.

Khanh Le
Executive Director
Unite Oregon

Apologies for the typos

Join our intercultural movement for equity and justice!

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www.uniteoregon.org

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