

To: Joint Interim Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response

Too many people in our community are suffering from addiction without services or housing. Criminalizing addiction would make things worse.

We need the legislature to address the lack of treatment services as the emergency that it is and rapidly deploy resources to our communities.

Forced treatment increases overdose risk, subjects people to abusive practices, and is no more effective than voluntary treatment. Our focus should be on increasing access to voluntary services in our communities, which is what Measure 110 is doing.

The state has nowhere near the public defenders it currently needs to respond to even the most serious cases. Arresting people for addiction will add thousands of minor drug cases onto already overburdened caseloads, and people who are not provided representation will inevitably be released back into the same conditions without addressing their underlying issues.

Redirecting scarce funds to wasteful policies would siphon money away from community-based addiction services, including housing, peer mentorship, and harm reduction intervention. This is where Measure 110 funds are currently allocated and acutely needed.

In Oregon, right now, less than half of those who enter jail needing mental health services are getting them. Oregon is also experiencing a severe shortage of public defenders, leading to delays in prosecution for all crimes — and even meaning some people charged with crimes are simply released. And we know it won't actually work because data shows that people are 27 times more likely to die from drug overdose after leaving jail or prison.

Our limited resources should fund addiction treatment and services, not be wasted on arrests, jail cells, and the criminal legal system.

Thank you.

Adam J. Smith
Arch Cape, OR
(503) 917-9066