

Dear esteemed members of the Oregon legislature,

I am reaching out to you as a concerned citizen of Oregon and as the Reimagining Community Safety Manager at Unite Oregon. I am writing to emphasize the importance of Measure 110 and to advocate for its continued funding and implementation. Measure 110 represents a critical shift in our state's approach to drug addiction – one that prioritizes treatment and rehabilitation over punitive measures. It is essential that we not only maintain this science-backed stance but also ensure it is adequately supported to realize its full potential.

Historically, Oregon's drug possession policies have ensnared Black, brown, and Indigenous individuals into the criminal justice system at disproportionately high rates. This has perpetuated a cycle of harm, mistrust, and alienation in these communities. Despite the implementation of Measure 110, law enforcement practices continue to target Black individuals disproportionately, leading to racial profiling and potential police brutality. Our state, already grappling with one of the nation's worst racial disparities in arrests, cannot afford to revert to these regressive policies.

The focus on arresting and jailing individuals for drug-related issues is an ineffective approach that also misappropriates funds that could be better used for community-based addiction services. Forced treatment has shown no more efficacy than voluntary treatment and can even increase the risk of overdose. Oregon's legal system, already strained and facing a severe shortage of public defenders, cannot bear the added burden. This not only delays justice for more serious cases but also fails to address the root problems of those struggling with addiction.

Measure 110 represents a step towards addressing these issues, focusing on increasing access to voluntary services and investing in crucial resources like detox beds, recovery services, and counseling staff. Funding these initiatives, rather than incarcerating individuals, would not only be a more humane but also a more effective approach in combating addiction.

As it stands, less than half of those entering jail in Oregon and needing mental health services receive them. This, coupled with the alarming data showing that individuals are 27 times more likely to die from a drug overdose post-incarceration, underscores the urgent need for a shift in our approach. We must prioritize supportive and voluntary treatment services, aligning our strategies with the objectives of Measure 110, to foster a more equitable and effective drug policy in Oregon. I urge you to consider these points seriously. It is not only a matter of justice and equity but also of public health and effective policy.

Thank you for your time and attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,  
Je Amaechi

