

Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Committee, for the record my name is Julia Mines. I'm the Executive Director of the Miracles Club.

Our organization is part of a Measure 110 Behavioral Health Resource Network, and the Oregon Black Brown Indigenous Advocacy Coalition (OBBIAC), a coalition of Black, Brown, and Indigenous providers of substance use disorder/mental health services. Our purpose is to build the power of people and communities most negatively impacted by the failed "War on Drugs". Many of us have experience as state trainers, local agency practitioners, executive directors, and writers of Oregon Administrative Rules. We've sat on hiring committees, state-level task forces, and coalitions. We've watched the evolution of this state's prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery infrastructure.

My organization Miracles Club was founded in 1993 by three men in recovery who sought to create a safe and sober environment to sustain the African American Community. Our community recovery center offers addiction peer services to the African American Community, a fellowship hall, events, and meeting space for community recovery meetings. We also offer a wide variety of program services with a focus on the African American recovery community. We provide transitional, temporary, and permanent housing in alcohol and drug free living environments for individuals in recovery. We have cooperative relationships with Multnomah County, the Oregon Health Authority, Central City Concern, Guardian Management, Bridges to Change and HealthShare managing recovery apartment buildings and Transitional Housing.

It has taken nearly thirty years for us to establish a strong foothold within Portland's African American community — both in terms of building up our organization's infrastructure and building deep trust within the communities we serve. Trust is essential when working to foster healing and begin the long work of addressing the multi-generational harms of the war on drugs. One of the most important ways we can continue to solidify trust within our community is by showing them that we will always be there to help. Sources of recurring funding, like what Measure 110 was designed to provide, help make that possible. Measure 110 grant funding is helping us maintain and grow our local presence, programs, housing and other service offerings. Thanks to new funding from Measure 110, we've been able to increase street outreach and transitional housing beds — including the first and ONLY transitional house for African American women in recovery. We have also been able to expand our outreach into Washington County.

The impact of our services cannot be overstated; 25 years ago it was forming connections with other people in recovery that gave me the hope I needed to begin my own recovery journey. Addiction is sometimes referred to as a "disease of despair"; restoring hope to someone in the midst of their struggle can be the difference between whether they come back for the recovery meeting or return to the old behaviors that threaten their recovery. Creating connection and restoring hope — or not — can be the difference between life or death.

Our Black and brown communities were directly targeted by the racist war on drugs. Measure 110 funds are the first time that organizations like mine have been given a source of stable, sustained funding. For the first time ever, the communities most harmed by drug war policies are leading the way toward healing. But so much more investment is needed. Media investigations by the Oregonian and KGW have highlighted the source of the problem: the shocking lack of treatment access in our communities. When Hooper detox turns away 200 people a month and releases 58% of their patients back onto the streets of Portland, we know that the problem isn't that people need to be arrested to get treatment. Portlanders struggling

with addiction are literally lining up daily for help only to be turned away and if they do get help are left on their own with little chance for stable recovery. Arresting them would make things worse, not better and as history tells us, puts Black and brown Oregonians at a higher risk. Portland already has the fifth worst arrest disparities in the nation; reverting back to failed drug war policies will only make this disparity worse, while saddling people — primarily people of color — with criminal records that make it harder for them to access housing and employment.

According to a January 2023 report from the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, there is a 49% gap between the amount of substance disorder treatment that is needed and what is currently available in Oregon. Treatment overall is severely underfunded in this state, and culturally specific treatment is even less available. As I already mentioned, Measure 110 has funded the first and *only* transitional house for African American women in recovery. Being surrounded by supportive figures who share your life experiences and who look like you is essential to recovery success. It's how we help people create supportive connections with others to see that recovery is possible for them too.

Oregon needs more culturally and linguistically specific services, and after 50 years of enacting policies created to specifically destroy my community, we must lean into a healthcare response and not reinstate failed past policies that are rooted in racism. And as we do this work together, we must never lose sight of the fact that it was Black and brown communities who were most targeted by racist drug war policies, and that we should be centered in all policymaking around how to heal these harms. I urge you to support the policy proposal to expand access to evidence-based, culturally specific, vital recovery services that save lives.

"When fully united, without ego or weakness, we become the greatest invisible force this world has ever witnessed."

- Luis Marques

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Executive Director

Miracles Club