

Dear Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and Members of the Committee:

Oregonians deserve real healing, real safety, and real solutions to drug addiction and overdose deaths. Our leaders must do more to address the crisis in our communities, but regressing back to failed drug war policies is not the answer.

I HAVE KNOWN PEOPLE & A COUPLE OF FRIENDS WHO HAD IN MY OPINION HIGHLY ADDICTIVE PERSONALITIES. LIKE THIS ONE FRIEND, HE WOULD NOT BUY JUST ONE CHAIR BUT 8 AND HE DIDN'T EVEN NEED ONE, THEN HE GOT INTO NARCOTICS AND WENT ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP WITH THEM. IT WAS LIKE HE COLLECTED THEM! HE DID THE SAME WITH ANYTHING HE TOUCHED AND ALL OF US WERE JUST ABOUT AS WORRIED FOR HIM AS ONE COULD BE! WE FELT THIS WAS AN ILLNESS AND CERTAINLY NOT A CRIME! NOW IF HE HAD COMMITTED A CRIME BECAUSE HE NEEDED HIS (FIX) AND HAD NO MONEY BUT STOLE FROM SOMEONE, NOW THAT IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. BUT SADDEST OF ALL HE WENT TO FAR AND THE NARCOTICS KILLED HIM. JUST HEART BREAKING!

Criminal penalties for people suffering from addiction disproportionately jails Black and Brown Oregonians and hurts people who are struggling. Courts are not qualified to determine whether or not a person needs drug treatment, nor should we force people into treatment when they are not ready to be successful in their recovery.

We deserve real solutions. Oregonians need housing, drug treatment, and mental health care -- and the needs are urgent. We must expand services so that people who want mental health and drug treatment can get it, and we need to reduce waiting lists and lines for detox services.

Handcuffs and jail cells cannot solve behavioral and public health problems like mental illness, homelessness, or addiction. I urge the committee to focus on helping our communities with real solutions that help people heal.

Sincerely,

Lary McKee
850 Mesquite lane North East
GERVAIS, Oregon, OR 97026