

Co-Chair Kropf, Co-Chair Lieber, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Asa DeCouteau, and I have lived in and around Portland nearly my entire life. I was raised by parents in active addiction, and while I work at a BHRN organization that receives critical Measure 110 funding, I am providing testimony in my capacity as a community member. I am writing today to call for real solutions, real treatment services, and real accountability from our state and local leaders. When Oregonians voted in favor of Measure 110 in 2020, we sent our elected leaders a message. We told the folks who represent us exactly what we wanted for our state and our communities. Thus far, that message has largely been ignored.

The most vulnerable members of our communities cannot wait. Oregonians experiencing substance use disorder need and want treatment – this is the most significant missing piece of this puzzle. To deny them that treatment is inhumane and directly at odds with what voters have asked for from our representatives across the state. I urge the committee to reject calls to return to the failed War on Drugs; we've tried that, and we know it doesn't work. We know that criminalizing addiction harms individuals, families, and communities. We know that criminalizing addiction means criminalizing poverty and homelessness. We know that criminalizing addiction disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, and Indigenous folks. And we know that harsher drug laws do not prevent drug use or addiction.

Providing the treatment, detox and stabilization, and other resources needed to support folks as they find recovery will require effort, but it is worthwhile. It is our best way out of this crisis. Treatment works. Recovery is possible.

I thank the committee again for the opportunity to provide testimony, and for your thoughtfulness in addressing Oregon's addiction crisis.

Asa DeCouteau

Accounting Supervisor | They/Them