Submitter: Aje Amaechi

On Behalf Of: Freedom to Thrive

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Measure: HB3431

My name is Aje Amaechi and I'm here to testify as neutral on HB3431. I am representing the organization Freedom to Thrive as a community organizer. I'm also here in my personal capacity, as a minority small business owner and volunteer crisis counselor. I often spend the majority of my shift as a crisis councilor speaking to people who have experienced the devastating impact of substance use on their families, their communities, on their own bodies and minds. So many people call for help and I had nowhere to send them. Beds are full. Service facilities are far and they have no transportation. Or they're expensive and they have no money or insurance.

According to a recent study by OHSU, Oregon's treatment capacity for addiction recovery services is only at half of what is needed to meet this overwhelming demand for help. Given this dire situation, it is unthinkable that you would even consider cutting vital behavioral health care services during this legislative session. Service providers rely on these funds to continue offering services to some of our most vulnerable community members. Just as they are beginning to hire more staff and open new programs to meet the growing demand, HB 3431 as is brings more hardship to an already heart-wrenching situation. It's essential that we support these providers and ensure that they have the resources they need to continue their vital work. I'm concerned that HB 3431, as currently written, would defund the Drug Treatment & Recovery Fund. While I understand the policy intent behind this bill, I have serious reservations about its impact on Measure 110 funding and its potential effects on community-based providers.

For years I worked in equitable economic development. I worked with PSU's Business Outreach program. I worked with Prosper Portland and was part of their Inclusive Business Research Network, I did this work because I was passionate about providing economic opportunity for Portlanders of color. I am also a small business owner. I know full well the importance of programs that increase economic opportunities for communities of color. And normally I wholeheartedly support these kind of programs. But generational wealth for some should NOT come at the expense of the most marginalized people of color in Oregon. It should also be apparent that when cities like Portland (where I live) have a lot of people who cannot access the recovery services they need, everyone suffers- business owners, property owners, and of course those suffering under substance use themselves and their families.

Oregon ranks last in access to services and second in addiction rates. Given these troubling statistics, it's clear that we cannot afford to cut services. Moreover, Measure 110 providers who would be most impacted by these cuts include those serving

Black, Brown, Indigenous, Tribal, Latino, and other communities of color. While I support the policy intent of HB 3431 but opposes its current form.

Oregon is blessed with enough resources to fund both HB 3431 and Measure 110 without adversely affecting addiction recovery providers. We should not have to choose between life and death, homeownership and entrepreneurship. Yet, the proposed legislation would reduce the 2023-2025 biennium revenue projections for Measure 110 services by 25%, cutting the fund by approximately $97.5 million, which would leave less than half of the current service level for addiction recovery services.

Freedom to Thrive is a nonprofit dedicated to building a world where safety means investment in people and planet and an end the punishment-based criminal and immigration systems., We understand the importance of equitable economic opportunities but not at the expense of those in recovery. We call on the Committee to consult with stakeholders to ensure that any changes made align with the goals of Measure 110 and promote a comprehensive, public health approach to addiction.