

Submitter: Patrick Lakeman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2024

To: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response From: YOUR NAME, ORGANIZATION

Re: Oppose HB 4002

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

My name is Patrick Lakeman.

Addiction is a healthcare issue, not a crime. We cannot address the addiction crisis with arrests and jails, which add barriers to stable housing and increase overdose deaths. Instead our communities need more investments in treatment, including outreach teams, peer mentor programs, and harm reduction services. People need help, not handcuffs.

I oppose HB 4002 and efforts to criminalize addiction.

As a person who worked with Portland's houseless population in Chinatown for six years, I have seen first hand the interactions between police officers untrained in crisis intervention, mental health first aid, and deescalation, and those suffering drug induced psychosis. Without guns on our hips, my team and many others in Portland strove to meet those facing multiple traumas on the streets with deescalation techniques. Our effort was to create safety for ourselves, the intoxicated person, and others around them through nonviolent means. Regardless of their toxic or dangerous behavior, the focus was to create a safer calmer scene, and to build a trusting relationship with a human being, to instill the hope that recovery and loving community was a pathway out of their present pain.

Addiction is not about morality, it is irrefutably about medicating trauma and pain. Drug use quickly hijacks every normal process of a person's biological ecosystem, bending them towards desperate procurement of drugs for continued use. Armed police officers more frequently represent an escalating presence for those in the throes of intoxication. I witnessed dozens of officers without proper training in deescalation behave in antagonizing manners that even sober and well resourced residents in Portland find difficult to respond to with calm. Untrained police intervention in drug related emergencies are as likely to be effective as they would be if called in to stand in for a surgeon. The entire concept of grinding the face of the poor and addicted in Portland through the justice system in response to drug possession is a continuation of racist practices and embarrassingly ignorant of even the most basic realities of trauma and addiction. HB 4002 is yet another refusal to

truly invest in the poor and oppressed in our city.

As a Christian I am deeply disappointed in the church in Oregon represented in the residents, legislature, and police who refuse to seek the peace and prosperity of those suffering addiction. There is no excuse in our world today with such a wealth of medical, social, historical, and theological understanding of the root causes of poverty, injustice, oppression, and the resultant drug markets. Punishing those suffering addiction is tantamount to stoning them to death, only much slower. The poor and needy will always be in Oregon and so it is the responsibility of those who have been given much to open their hands to the poor sufficient for what they lack. Those suffering addiction desperately need liberation from their chemically imprisoned bodies, and their oppressed minds, not to be enslaved for petty crime and saddled stone by stone by institutionalized disgust, thinly masked as the justice system.

People suffering from addiction need investments to the continuum of care. They need successful peer outreach and mobile crisis programs to help move people into housing and services. And we need for law enforcement and service providers to work together to connect people to services is the direction that our state should head.

I urge you to oppose HB 4002. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Patrick lakeman