

Submitter: Steve Gladfelter

On Behalf Of: Criminalizing addiction only creates more criminal

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

"I am writing to urge you to vote NO on HB 4002. This bill will overturn Measure 110, making possession of small amounts of controlled substances a misdemeanor punishable by jail time, a fine, or both. Criminalizing addiction has never worked to reduce overdose deaths or help people get care. HB 4002 takes us backwards by:

- Treating addiction as a crime;
- Inflicting more government harm and violence on Black and brown communities;
- Putting Measure 110 funding at risk. Diverting funding to the criminal system that could be used for addiction services;
- Further overburdens the public defense system, which is already over capacity.

Addiction is not a crime, it is a healthcare issue. Oregon can and must do better than HB 4002 to address the addictions crisis. HB 4002 is an inadequate and harmful approach that will not solve our addictions crisis and will instead waste taxpayer dollars. HB 4002 will result in more people going to jail, more people being harmed, more individuals being displaced, more families being disrupted, more people dying from overdoses. The legislature should focus on real solutions that will help our communities instead of returning to the failed policies of the past that simply won't work.

I urge you to please vote no on HB 4002.

Personal note: Prohibition and criminalization have been huge failures, as seen by the amount of death and suffering they inflict on communities, the high cost, and loss of freedom that always results from such policies. Have we not learned the lessons of the past, from alcohol prohibition to the failed war on drugs? Criminalizing addiction only creates more criminals and more crime. This has been the result every single time prohibition is enacted and there is a demand for the prohibited substance(s). Addiction is a medical issue, not a law enforcement issue. Locking up addicts is as cruel and amoral as locking up people with clinical depression by legislating that their condition is a crime. If the goal is to reduce addiction, then proven strategies such as ibogaine therapy should be employed, not prison.

Instead of following Nixon's failed policies, we should emulate Portugal's approach to drug policy, which has had enormous success at reducing addiction and crime. In fact, I would welcome a safe injection site in my own neighborhood. Better than people using in parks and leaving needles on the ground!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Steve Gladfelter
Eugene, Oregon"