

Submitter: Rene Braga

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Rene Braga. Thank you for the opportunity to write to you. I'm writing to oppose HB 4002 OR the re-criminalization of our community. It didn't work before and it won't work now either.

HB 4002 creates a destructive revolving door treatment system that hurts people suffering with addiction. There is minimal treatment available for anyone, including people who are arrested. Hooper Detox turns away 200 people a month. People arrested will be charged, released, and sent back to the streets with life-damaging criminal records that make it more difficult to get housing, government assistance, jobs, and education.

HB 4002 spends massive amounts of taxpayer dollars on state and local governments to build out an already proven ineffective criminal system. It never worked before, hence Measure 110, so what makes you all think this will work again? The proposal adds layers of exorbitantly expensive, unfunded expenses to our criminal system, which already costs Oregonians billions in tax dollars annually. Lawmakers have not shown how much all of this will cost, how they will pay for it, or how they will prevent this from defunding real solutions like treatment, housing, non-police mobile crisis counselors, and neighborhood revitalization and cleanup efforts.

HB 4002 will dramatically increase the burden on the public defense system that is already in crisis. Oregon is already under federal court order to release people with serious charges because of lack of public defenders. HB 4002 could bring thousands of new people to the caseload.

HB 4002 forces people into torturous withdrawals and increasing overdose deaths. County jails are currently seeing record deaths among people in custody — including by drug overdose — and do not have the ability to safely manage fentanyl withdrawals. After going through excruciating pain, people will be released back to the streets, which is the most dangerous time for overdose risk.

HB 4002 criminalizes homelessness and poverty. Oregon has high public drug use because we have unacceptable rates of homelessness. Lawmakers are targeting people in poverty — whose private suffering is in public view. People living in poverty are most vulnerable to the revolving door of despair and government harm and violence that comes from policing and arresting people with addiction.

HB 4002 repeats the State's failures and creates massively expensive, overly

complicated, and violent systems that have failed in the past, are not evidence based, and will delay and defund real solutions to the addiction crisis. The State failed to implement Measure 110 in a timely manner and now the Legislature proposes to throw out years of work to create new crimes and complicated bureaucracies that will take years to implement. The most recent research from Portland State University says there is no evidence that repealing Measure 110 will result in improved treatment through the criminal system because that system has never successfully connected people to treatment.

Please consider these examples as a token of the multitude of reasons we should not in good conscience go back to the criminalization of people who are in need of housing, mental and addiction services instead of locking them up and pretending this issue will disappear. Thank you for your time.