

Submitter: Anna Sanchez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Anna Sanchez and I am writing to you as a concerned citizen affiliated with Unite Oregon, a community-based organization committed to social justice, equity, and inclusivity. Today, I wish to express my strong opposition to House Bill 4002 and advocate for a more compassionate and effective approach to address the crisis in our state.

Addiction is not a crime; it is a healthcare issue that requires thoughtful and evidence-based solutions. HB 4002, unfortunately, falls short of meeting these criteria and presents a worrisome and harmful trajectory for addressing addiction-related challenges. This measure also neglects the crucial distinction between treating addiction as a healthcare issue versus a criminal offense. Placing the focus on punitive measures, such as increased incarceration rates, not only fails to address the root causes of addiction but also exacerbates the harm inflicted on individuals and our loved ones.

Being a Latina, it concerns me deeply that this will have the potential for increased harm and violence on our Black and brown communities. It is disheartening to see that HB 4002 may contribute to existing disparities within our criminal justice system, disproportionately affecting Oregonians of color with higher arrest rates and harsher sentencing.

Furthermore, the bill's potential to waste our taxpayer dollars is a significant concern. Allocating resources towards incarceration rather than comprehensive addiction treatment and support services is not only inefficient but also counterproductive in addressing the core issues at hand. Our state should prioritize cost-effective and evidence-based strategies that contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities.

HB 4002's consequences, including more people going to jail, increased harm, displacement of individuals, disruption of families, and heightened risks of overdose deaths, underscore the urgent need for a reevaluation of the bill's approach. These outcomes are not aligned with the values of compassion and justice that our community strives for.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the approach outlined in HB 4002 and work towards a solution that prioritizes healthcare over punitive measures. I believe in fostering a community that embraces inclusivity, fairness, and equity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Let's Together, forge a path that truly addresses the addiction crisis while upholding the values we hold dear.