

Submitter: Josh Reagan

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Dr Josh Reagan and I spend a large portion of my professional time caring for pregnant people and families with substance use disorder. Through my years doing this I have learned that they are normal people who have fallen into a trap with a substance that can control at times how they act and what they do and how they feel when they don't take it. They themselves are not bad people who are necessarily unsafe for our community, at least not any more than someone with alcohol use disorder who drinks to cope with parts of their life that feel beyond their control at times. While people need to be responsible for their actions when crimes are committed that hurt other people, the legal system is a very blunt and at times harmful way of treating people with addiction. Frequently my patients who are recovering are held back by their prior legal history, and while they try to find work or housing to care for their family, a prior conviction makes that virtually impossible. There are many people who use substances who can't get sober but desperately want to. Our system is not good at taking care of families who are struggling with addiction in ways that don't separate the family. There are not systems in place to care for somebody on the street's best friend (often their dog) so that they can access addiction services. And we don't have many medical facilities that adequately help people transition off powerful substances like fentanyl, without experience excruciating pain and anxiety in the form of withdrawal. Our medical system has treated people with a substance use disorder like they don't even deserve medical care, at least for the decades I have seen it in action, which has created multiple additional barriers and sometimes led to deaths. Most people with addiction need adequate services that will help provide appropriate care in a setting that is kind and feels accessible. We truly don't have that yet, and putting them in jail is not clearly the correct alternate response. Thank you.