

Submitter: Esther Portnoy

On Behalf Of: Don't Recriminalize Drugs - Build a System of Care

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I am deeply concerned with HB 4002 and URGE YOU TO OPPOSE IT. HB 4002 is a harmful step backward. 110 has not worked as we hoped, and needs to be revised -- in particular, we need to have more treatment resources available and affordable.. But simply going back to the old way in unacceptable.

Recriminalizing drug possession and giving police the power to decide who gets help are false promises of change. It will cycle people in and out of jail and right back onto the streets. All while increasing overdose risk, disrupting lifesaving services and treatment, and saddling people with criminal records that are lifelong barriers to housing, jobs, education, and so much more.

Due to targeted enforcement, I know that Black, Brown, and Indigenous people and those experiencing poverty will be the most unfairly harmed. It won't address root causes or conditions on the street. And it will undermine any effort to support people in crisis. In short, it will only make things worse.

We deserve real solutions to overdose, addiction, homelessness, and other public suffering in our communities. Yet instead of providing the services and supports that are proven to help, it's so disappointing to see legislators rushing to double down on the failed drug war which will treat people with addiction as criminals and only worsen the public suffering that people are concerned about.

Overdose, homelessness, and other public suffering are the direct result of decades of severe government underinvestment in public systems. Yet lawmakers are using Measure 110 as a scapegoat and proposing criminalization as a "quick fix" to public suffering in communities. But criminalization has never worked and only does more harm.

We can't arrest or punish our way out of this. PLEASE OPPOSE HB 4002 AND FOCUS ON REAL SOLUTIONS such as building a full system of care with more addiction services and treatment, overdose prevention centers, rapid response behavioral health services, resources for local communities, and accessible housing and shelter.