

Submitter: Emilie Junge

On Behalf Of: No on recriminalization

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Emilie Junge I am a pro bono attorney with the Clear Clinic, where we provide assistance with criminal records expungement for the 10s of thousands of Oregonians across the state who have criminal records, and are trying to move on with their life. I see the tail end of the criminal justice system, where people in recovery or otherwise seeking to get jobs and housing come to us for help in navigating the expungement process, which is not easy.

In the last couple of years to the present, we have done more than 8,000 criminal record expungements, the majority of which I estimate are connected to substance use disorder and the criminalization of drug use.

If you stop and think about each of these cases, many of which involve multiple counts, and the cost, expense, and trauma involved in arresting, transporting, booking, sometimes incarcerating and discharging all of these people from an already overburdened system, it is astounding. At the same time, the legislature is proposing to abandon public health interventions and substitute the criminal prosecution system in dealing with the crisis of drug use. There is a big difference between citing someone and intervening, and charging them with a misdemeanor. Even if it is glossed over as “deflection” or “diversion” – the approach being discussed is counterproductive, costly, and at best, premature. All of the testimony that you heard from experts last year, and my own experience, tells us that coerced treatment does not work, So I am curious why the legislators are in denial about this and willing to go back to complicated and expensive solutions instead of the obvious approach, which is funding and expanding public health interventions whenever drug users in active use are causing problems, and strengthening the treatment solutions.

We have not given Measure 110 the time and resources to work, and I am here to urge you to do that.