

Submitter: Stephanie Duncker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to House Bill 4002, which, if enacted, will undermine the progress we have made in addressing addiction as a public health issue in Oregon. As your constituent, I urge you to work towards more effective solutions that prioritize the well-being of our communities.

HB 4002, as it currently stands, exhibits several critical flaws that I believe will have severe repercussions on public health, community well-being, and the fair treatment of individuals grappling with addiction. For one, HB 4002 abandons the crucial goal of treating addiction as a public health issue, opting instead for a punitive approach that classifies possession of controlled substances as a criminal offense.

Plus, granting police and prosecutors ultimate authority over treatment services raises serious concerns about the prioritization of punitive measures over the expertise of addiction health providers. Not to mention, the establishment of 36 new criminal system bureaucracies and the resulting increase in public defense caseloads are not only costly but also divert much-needed funds away from addiction services. HB 4002 is poised to disproportionately harm Black and brown communities, perpetuating existing racial disparities in arrests, sentencing, and access to diversion programs.

There is a lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of criminalizing drug possession in improving public safety or reducing overdose rates. Moreover, the criminalization of addiction exacerbates existing challenges faced by individuals living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

I urge you to consider the invaluable contributions of Measure 110 providers and ensure that their funding is protected, enabling them to continue their essential work in addressing addiction.

In conclusion, HB 4002 represents a step backward in our collective efforts to combat addiction and promote community well-being. I implore you to prioritize evidence-based, compassionate solutions that build on the successes of initiatives like Measure 110 and ensure equitable access to treatment services for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised by your constituents in evaluating the potential impact of HB 4002.