

Submitter: Izabelle Kenoyer

On Behalf Of: Criminalization is wasteful spending

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I oppose HB 4002 and efforts to criminalize addiction.

Addiction is a healthcare issue, not a crime. We cannot address the addiction crisis with arrests and jails, which add barriers to stable housing and increase overdose deaths. Instead our communities need more investments in treatment, including outreach teams and peer mentor programs. People need help, not handcuffs.

Me and my life partner both work directly with unhoused communities in Portland, many of whom struggle with their mental health relating to substance dependency. We both see firsthand daily how damaging it has been to funnel resources into criminalizing what we have fought so hard to finally be recognized as what it is: a public health emergency.

Recriminalizing people's mental wellbeing is not going to change this fact. It is only going to waste money and time, and in the end lead to more deaths and dependency.

Arresting and jailing people for addiction has never worked. Criminalization has inflicted decades of government harm and violence on Black and brown communities. Giving a new name to the old war on drugs won't change the results: HB 4002 will harm, not help, Oregonians.

People suffering from addiction need investments to the continuum of care. They need successful peer outreach and mobile crisis programs to help move people into housing and services. And we need law enforcement and service providers to work together to connect people to services. Oregon can do this work without making addiction a crime. This is the direction that our state should head.

I urge you to oppose HB 4002 and efforts to criminalize addiction.