

Submitter: Erica Cuesta
On Behalf Of: No to criminalization
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.

I am a Latina immigrant women in recovery for 20 years, obtaining my CRM certificate has helped me better understand and work with my Latinx community on addiction issues in spanish. I have been in Oregon for 20 years and this is the first time I have seen such important resources as recovery programs, classes, workshops, etc. on addiction issues in the Spanish language. We are a community that has always been discriminated against and criminalized due to its appearance and many other barriers. If this measure is removed it would harm our minority communities from having access to programs and services for addiction prevention and recovery.

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.