

To: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
From: Eleanor Ponomareff, Talent City Council
Subject: Opposition to HB 4002
Date: February 6, 2024

Co-Chairs Leiber and Kropf, Members of the Committee,

I am a member of the Talent City Council, now in my second term, speaking on behalf of myself, and my constituents.

I am testifying in **strong opposition to the recriminalization portion of HB 4002**, which would only worsen the same crises the bill claims to address, by returning to the failed and harmful practices of the War on Drugs, and weakening the most vital connection to recovery, that of trust.

Here in rural Southern Oregon, our community dealt with crisis when the Labor Day fires destroyed a third of the small town of Talent, where I live. Our community responded by creating an infrastructure of support. We stood up mutual aid sites; we delivered meals to people's doorsteps; we found solutions that worked. In short, we came together as a community, respecting the dignity of every survivor, and became more resilient for it.

That is how communities heal.

The dual crisis of addiction and homelessness requires real solutions of housing and behavioral health services – both of which are lacking here in rural Southern Oregon. In Jackson County I have heard public servants not connected to housing or behavioral health repeat a misleading mantra, that unhoused people refuse services. In reality, those services are virtually non-existent, or far too difficult to obtain.

Recriminalization relies on distortion of fact, fearmongering, and other-izing our community members who live unhoused. The evidence, as well as our experience, points us to a better way. We just need the courage to see it through.

Please reject the recriminalization portion of this bill. We need to fund real solutions, not more jails.

Thank you for your good work.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Ponomareff
Talent City Council, Position #5
Talent, Oregon