

Submitter: Danna Richkun
On Behalf Of: Please Do Not Recriminalize
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Measure: HB4002

Dear representatives,

As an addictions nurse working for a Measure 110 funded jail-based MAT/MOUD program and as the mother to a son affected for many years by opioid use disorder I am writing to implore you to keep Measure 110 intact and to expand, rather than repeal it.

As a mother I have witnessed my son's struggle with opioid use disorder since 2008. I have watched him struggle through homelessness, multiple overdoses and the vicious cycle of a broken system that has ferried him from homelessness, to emergency rooms, through failed treatment paradigms and lengthy, costly jail sentences that only landed him back on the street and entrenched him further into his addiction and into the street-ED-jail-street cycle yet again.

I can say assuredly that the biggest barrier to stability my son has faced—disrupting his access to housing, treatment and job security—has been his involvement in the criminal justice system. After many years of struggle my son found recovery with the help of MOUD/MAT (medication for opioid use disorder) and has maintained his recovery, aside from a few brief returns to use, for many years. Even so, the criminal record that follows him has impeded him from establishing safe and secure housing and employment—forms of stability that could support his recovery for the long term. Just weeks ago my son was hired for a new job and held his breath during the background investigation. Luckily for him, his company only examines criminal offenses dating back seven years. If drugs are re-criminalized, all it would take is one momentary slip for his many years of hard work and progress to be lost.

In my work as a nurse care manager in a Measure 110 funded program for patients receiving MOUD/MAT in jail, I see hope for participants who are in circumstances similar to what my son struggled with for years. Stabilized on medications and with the protections Measure 110 affords, these participants have a better chance of establishing secure, productive lives and escaping the cycle my son was embroiled in for so many years. The system is not perfect, by any means. Participants in my program leave jail and struggle to find housing and inpatient treatment when needed, making it difficult for many to maintain recovery with MOUD/MAT.

Wrap around services such as on demand treatment and housing are sorely lacking in Oregon. What is needed is more focus on building these vital services within the Measure 110 framework, not a return to the criminalization that disproportionately

affects people of color and other dispossessed groups and entraps so many Oregon citizens into cycles of worsening addiction and homelessness. Again, as your constituent, a mother and a person working in this field, I implore you to to preserve and expand voter-approved Measure 110 and give people in Oregon struggling with substance use disorders a fair chance at full, productive lives.