

Submitter: Amanda Pham Haines

On Behalf Of: No on recriminalization

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Amanda Pham Haines & I am a community advocate, the Anti-Displacement PDX Coalition Director, and Housing Justice Manager at Unite Oregon.

As someone who has experienced addiction firsthand, and lost many friends and colleagues to the intersection of addiction and mental health, I am passionate about supporting policies that approach addiction, houselessness, and the mental health crises facing our country as a COMMUNITY issue. All 3 of these issues come with a great deal of social stigma and result in guilt and shame for those suffering most. That stigma often demonizes the addict and dehumanizes them as some sort of villain intentionally terrorizing communities.

We cannot expect the most vulnerable and under resourced members of our community to do better when we barely have the resources to support them, and we push through policies like this one based on this narrative of the addict as some malicious-outsider invading our community. They are a part of us, just as we are a part of them, or in many cases, we are them.

Like with all social change, there will be growing pains, there will be a learning curve, and there will be new challenges that arise with change. Reacting by passing new legislation that recriminalizes fundamentally changes the spirit and implementation of the original measure, and will not get us closer to the safe and healthy community we want to see. HB 4002 will not decrease drug use and it will increase our courts backlog in predictable ways. Court is inefficient, and if people miss a court date (which would make sense if you are suffering with addiction &/or houselessness) fines can increase & add to the already daunting mountain of things that may be pushing that person towards substance abuse in the first place.

Addiction is a cycle, and it is a cycle that is extremely challenging to break alone. We need to protect all members of our community, and often times that requires consistency and non-reactivity. For these reasons and many more I implore you to vote against HB 4002 - I do not want my tax dollars used to recriminalize the disease of addiction.