

TO: Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response  
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate  
RE: No to Re-Criminalizing Addiction in HB 4002  
DATE: February 7, 2024



Chairs Lieber and Kropf, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is "to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry.*" We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today, and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty. From [mass incarceration](#) to [exorbitant fines](#) to [over-sentencing](#), too many facets of the U.S. criminal system have the impact of entrenching [generational poverty](#) and widening disparities, particularly in BIPOC and gender expansive communities who experience disproportionate police violence, arrest, and incarceration.

### **Re-Criminalization will widen racial disparities relating to food, housing, and jobs.**

The reality is with HB 4002, Black and Brown Oregonians will be arrested and incarcerated at disproportionate rates and face harsher sentences. Today, even after Measure 110, [Black Oregonians are issued M110 citations at double the rate of their population](#). Portland police have the [5th highest arrest rate](#) disparities in the country. [People of color are disproportionately excluded from diversion](#) and are more likely to be placed in [diversion programs that disproportionately fail people of color](#).

Studies by the National Institute of Health show that [90 percent of people returning from incarceration experience food insecurity](#); and among households with a formerly incarcerated member, [70 percent struggle to meet essential needs like food and housing](#).

**Put simply, there is a direct link between [higher rates of hunger among community members who are Black and Brown](#) and inequities in the criminal justice system. We believe the re-criminalization proposals in HB 4002 will widen these disparities even further.**

Moreover, the overdose crisis is not unique to Oregon. A recent CDC report shows that [decriminalization in Oregon \(and also Washington\) had no impact on either states' overdose rates](#). Fatal opioid overdose rates were already increasing because [fentanyl was introduced to Oregon's unregulated drug supply in 2020](#), not because of Measure 110. As [Sgt. Aaron Schmautz, Portland Police Association President](#) testified in Salem, "Addiction and mental health concerns are a health issue. We cannot and should not attempt to arrest our way out of these issues."

### **More people are finally accessing the treatment and housing services they need to recover.**

While Measure 110 is just one piece of the puzzle, it has already begun to make profound improvements to people's lives. [Oregon Health Authority reported](#) that within the first year of Measure 110 implementation, there was a **298% increase in client screening**, a **296% increase in housing services** provided to clients, and a **143% increase in client encounters** with substance use treatment providers.

**We urge you to oppose HB 4002**, which not only resurrects "war on drugs" policies that failed for 50 years, but has no provisions to protect funding for life-changing services, will make delivering services more difficult, increase overdose risk, and harm our communities. We need to stay focused on providing treatment, shelter and housing instead of returning to the harmful and ineffective policies of the past.

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