

Michelle Stroh Testimony to the
Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety
February 7, 2024

Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Committee:

My name is Michele Stroh. I am from Oregon City.

I am here today on behalf of my son Keaton who died of an accidental fentanyl overdose in July 2020.

I am here on behalf all the other Oregon moms and dads who have buried children due to the drug crisis that has overtaken our state. Oregon now leads the nation in the growth of drug overdoses among teenagers.

Keaton was a good kid. He joined the Marines at 19. He loved being a Marine and was proud to wear the uniform. Keaton was discharged from the Marines for doing something stupid, but at all uncommon for kids his age – he used cocaine after drinking at a party.

It's the same sort of thing that any of your kids in college or working in a job could do. You see, Oregon's drug crisis isn't only about downtown Portland, open-air drug use and homeless camps. It's about all of us – even a former United States Marine from a good family in Oregon City.

Fentanyl doesn't discriminate.

After the Marines, we noticed Keaton drinking a lot more. For a time, he lived in California. Frankly, part of me wanted him to stay away from what Oregon had become – a drug mecca.

This may be the worst impact of Measure 110. Oregon is now THE place in the nation to use drugs, buy drugs, sell drugs, traffic drugs. The culture Measure 110 has created regarding drug use is "live and let live". But for Keaton and many others, Measure 110 means "live and let die".

Keaton died of cardiac arrest from taking several pills laced with fentanyl. He never stood a chance against this powerful, deadly enemy.

How many more kids like have to die before those if you with the power, money, and responsibility to fix Measure 110 – take action?

I urge you to recriminalize hard drugs as a Class A misdemeanor. A low-level Class C is NO MATCH to scare kids and others to avoid drugs...and 30 days is simply not enough time to save anyone who is addicted to fentanyl and these other modern drugs.

A Class C misdemeanor is simply a death sentence delayed 30 days.

I also urge you to do more to expand treatment centers. I agree with what the Governor said, we need a comprehensive set of changes to Measure 110.

Laws matter. Policies matter. But the law is also a teacher. And right now, Oregon is teaching all the wrong lessons. You have the power to begin to change that.

Thank you.