



TESTIMONY - Public Hearing on HB 4002, 4036, SB 1555

February 7, 2024

Justice Advocates is a grassroots criminal justice organization in the Portland area that is working for the elimination of unfair and harmful practices in our criminal legal system. We supported the passage of Measure 110.

The people voted overwhelmingly for decriminalizing personal use of addictive substances. They got it: addiction is a health issue, not a crime. And for most people, treatment works when they are ready for it and when it is non-punitive. It works when the treatment programs are linked with solving individuals' other problems, such as housing or mental health, and when there are peer mentors who understand the clients.

Those who now want to re-criminalize personal-use amounts of drugs and force people into treatment programs either are uninformed about the failure of past "drug war" policies, or simply don't care about or understand new approaches that work. Maybe they also don't understand that the public use issue is a product of our homelessness problem. Let's target real causes, not the poor people who need help. We can't arrest our way out of addiction problems. HB 4002, HB 4036, and SB 1555 are the wrong approach.

Because Oregon was so lacking in treatment facilities, it has taken some time to increase availability all around the state. But now the program is up and running and succeeding. This is not the time to move back to old ways that didn't work.

Oregon is a progressive state. We were a leader in passing M.110 and piloting new ways to address drug use. Let's continue being leaders by giving the program sufficient time and funding and then fairly evaluating its success.

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