



February 7th, 2024

Chairs Lieber and Kropf and members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response,

My name is Jon Isaacs, and I am the Executive Vice President of Public Affairs for the Portland Metro Chamber. Thank you for allowing me to join you virtually today. The Portland Metro Chamber (The Chamber) is greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce and represents the largest, most diverse network of businesses in the region.

The Portland Metro Chamber is the formal contractual partner of Downtown Portland Clean & Safe, the largest business improvement district in Portland, covering most of the westside of Downtown Portland. Downtown Clean & Safe provides enhanced cleaning and security services, coordinates and leads the city's downtown retail promotion strategy, and publishes the official statistics measuring the health of downtown including foot traffic and commercial and retail leasing activity.

I am writing today to express the Chamber's strong support for House Bill 4002 and all accompanying legislation. To put it clearly, the explosion of the public use and open air dealing of fentanyl is the single biggest problem facing downtown and the entire City of Portland. We have concluded that if we don't take urgent action to stem the tide of fentanyl, we will not be able to make the progress our city desperately needs on homelessness and crime, and it will continue to undermine the historic investments we have made in affordable housing. We have worked tirelessly the past two years with our partners at the City of Portland, TriMet, Portland Police and Fire Bureaus, Travel Portland, the Multnomah County District Attorney's office, neighborhood associations, and more to revitalize and recover downtown Portland. We have made measurable progress, but no matter the effort and the financial investment - which is well into the tens of millions of public and private dollars - we cannot overcome the unrelenting scourge of fentanyl by ourselves.

It's time to admit, that no matter how good the intentions were, it was a mistake to decriminalize hard addictive drugs, especially a super drug like fentanyl. We can tell you from the day-to-day work on the streets, that we've lost control of the problem and if we are to have any chance of turning this around we have to do four things that are all a part of HB 4002:

1. **Accountability:** We must make possession of hard drugs like fentanyl a crime that comes with meaningful consequences. These consequences must be paired with a diversion pathway into drug and mental health treatment. This cannot be a voluntary system if we are serious about solving the problem. Reclassifying possession as a misdemeanor will also bring back critical tools our law enforcement officers need to identify carriers of larger amounts of drugs and other crimes such as unlawful possession of firearms.
2. **24/7 gateway to sobering, treatment, and recovery:** Communities must be required to open 24/7 first responder drop off sobering centers that have enough capacity to consistently have space available. We are thrilled that funding and requirements for sobering centers are included in this plan. These state resources must come with clear requirements for 24/7 first responder drop off and standards for minimizing impacts such as good neighbor agreements. Sobering centers must serve as the entry way into the continuum of



services to transition homeless addicted residents into treatment and stable housing. Paired with meaningful criminal consequences this will re-establish a modern diversion program that meets our needs today. One cannot work without the other.

3. **Crack down on all drug dealing:** Approve the toughest penalties for fentanyl dealers, including street dealers. We strongly support the provisions of this bill that will add penalties for dealing drugs in proximity to shelters, treatment facilities, and parks. We have seen first hand the impacts.
4. **Urgent deployment of funds for treatment facilities:** Dedicated funds need to get out the door fast. We need to see action from the Oregon Health Authority that demonstrates that it understands how urgent the problem is. Cut the red tape, work with established partners like Central City Concern, and get expanded drug treatment, recovery, and mental health services up and running immediately.

For these reasons, the Portland Metro Chamber strongly urges your support for HB 4002. Thank you for your time.

Jon Isaacs (*he/him*)

Executive Vice President, Public Affairs

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Greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce

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