

TO: Joint Committee on Addiction on Community Safety Response
FROM: Max Vogel
DATE: February 7, 2024
RE: Oppose M110 Recriminalization Bills: HB 4002, HB 4036, SB 1555

Chair Lieber and Chair Kropf and Members of the Committee:

My name is Max Vogel and I am a public defender for Multnomah County. I am strongly opposed to HB 4002, 4036, and SB 1555. I am deeply disappointed to see the legislature considering a return to recriminalization, Boyd deliveries, and enhancements based on location of a delivery. These are the failed policies of the War on Drugs: a deeply shameful era of our state's and nation's history. After decades of attempting to address drug use through the criminal system, the scholarly consensus is resounding: despite incredibly high expenditures on policing and prosecution, there is no link between criminalization and a reduction in drug use.

Substance Use Disorders are not new to Oregon, and their prevalence has increased nationwide with the rise in fentanyl: this represents a national public health crisis, not caused by Oregon's decriminalization, but certainly exacerbated by Oregon ranking dead last in the country for access to addiction treatment services.

My clients with substance use disorders are deeply motivated by and desperate for treatment. My clients sit in jail for months on waitlists for a treatment bed. My clients line up at outside the Hooper Detoxification Center at 6am, hoping to get a spot just to detox for a few days. And if they finally get into a long term treatment program somewhere, that program is likely to lack clear standards and data for safety and effectiveness.

The answer to this problem is obvious: we need to rapidly expand access to evidence-based and medically-assisted treatment. To further criminalize people with substance use disorders is not the solution—Why would we return to the policies that have been most extensively documented to be an abject failure?