

Submitter: Dana Hepper

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

We talk a lot about addiction, but we don't spend enough time looking at how addiction often begins: with traumatic and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including parental incarceration and parental addiction. Children ages 0-5 are profoundly negatively impacted by their parents' involvement in the criminal justice system as a consequence of their addiction. Adults experiencing addiction often first experienced trauma as children. And yet HB 4002 focuses too much on "treating" more parents with arrests rather than with the support and services they and their families need to break intergenerational cycles of trauma.

Criminalizing drug addiction is a policy that will separate more children from their parents, disrupt early childhood bonding, and deepen damaging cycles. If we are truly committed to making policies that address addiction, we would not return to criminalization. Our policy solutions need to strengthen relationships between parents and children, heal unhealthy cycles, and create hope for families and for our state. It's irresponsible to propose policies that will deepen generational addiction. We should be focus on disrupting childhood traumas before we are too late.

Please consider expanding access to effective treatment services and parent-child services instead of recriminalization. Thank you.