

Submitter: Rachael Kabaker

On Behalf Of: No to criminalization

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I oppose HB 4002 and efforts to criminalize addiction.

Addiction is a healthcare issue, not a crime. We cannot address the addiction crisis with arrests and jails, which add barriers to stable housing and increase overdose deaths. Instead our communities need more investments in treatment, including outreach teams and peer mentor programs. People need help, not handcuffs.

As an MSW student and homeowner in Portland, OR I care about ALL members of my community. There is a wealth of both quantitative and qualitative data that illustrates that incarceration is not only an ineffective and inhuman solution to a health crisis impacting the most vulnerable members of our communities, it is an incredibly expensive drain on resources that would much better serve all of us. If any member of our community is unwell, that is a failure on all of our parts. As both a tax payer and a human being I stand with my community, and as elected officials it is my hope and expectation that you do as well. A vote for HB 4002 is a vote against what the people of Oregon want.

Arresting and jailing people for addiction has never worked. Criminalization has inflicted decades of government harm and violence on Black and brown communities. Giving a new name to the old war on drugs won't change the results: HB 4002 will harm, not help, Oregonians.

People suffering from addiction need investments to the continuum of care. They need successful peer outreach and mobile crisis programs to help move people into housing and services. And we need law enforcement and service providers to work together to connect people to services. Oregon can do this work without making addiction a crime. This is the direction that our state should head.

I urge you to oppose HB 4002 and efforts to criminalize addiction.