



## Testimony in Opposition to SB 1555, HB 4036, HB 4002

**Gloria Ochoa-Sandoval, Unite Oregon**

**February 7th, 2024**

Co-Chairs Lieber and Kropf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 1555, HB 4036, and HB 4002. I will be focused on HB 4002, since SB 1555 and HB 4036 are so maliciously written that I have nothing left to say. My name is Gloria Ochoa-Sandoval and I am the Policy Director at Unite Oregon. We are a statewide nonprofit organization in both urban and rural Oregon; that is led by and represents Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants and refugees, and folks experiencing poverty.

I have struggled to decide what to say today as I fight professionally for a very personal issue. I am representing this organization, and as part of its membership, I am also speaking for myself and my family. I have talked to most of you several times regarding our concerns. I have noted that criminalization was created to oppress Black people in the United States, that criminalizing public use was an attack on houseless people experiencing poverty, and that criminalizing possession is harming people that need care and is a direct investment in the War on Drugs, Nixon's War on People of Color.

I hear that you understand that and that your intent is not to uplift any form of systemic racism, but let's talk about your impact.

You keep referring to law enforcement needing a stick to address drug use. I am disappointed at how radicalized the term decriminalization is but you have no shame using the word stick, that comes from a disgusting history of police brutality. So let's talk about the stick you have brought to the table for law enforcement.

- One month locked in jail, separated from family and community.
- Expansive and radical interpretations of drug users' perceived intentions to



deliver, a perception that has never worked for People of Color.

- Deflection programs with no requirement to partner with our thriving, culturally responsive BHRN networks.
- A useless waiting period for record sealing and expungement.

So many opportunities to harm our communities because you don't want to fully invest in and wait for a functioning system like M110 to heal our communities. Instead, you'd rather return to the 75 year old system of criminalization that got us here to begin with.

These bills are not the frustrating in between. It is a made up idea of a system that will only work for our communities if it is not founded in a system that currently, not only historically, disproportionately criminalizes People of Color. For as long as there is discretion to law enforcement, there is discretion for racism, at the cost of our communities' lives. I wish I could call this a failure, but it's a success to the systems of oppression that pay the bills of the privileged with the lives of our most vulnerable.