

February 9, 2024
Re: Oppose HB 4002

To: Co-Chairs Lieber and Kropf and Members of the Committee on Addiction and Community Safety,

My name is Steph Routh, and I am proud to be a Portlander and an Oregonian. I am proud because we make choices, sometimes controversial choices, that aren't easy but that work to serve the needs of communities. We make bold choices with vision, and sometimes we know that realizing our vision takes time.

Voters overwhelmingly passed Measure 110 because we recognize that addiction is a health issue, not a crime. Please focus on our greatest need, which is getting Measure 110-enabled resources on the ground and accessible to service providers, first responders, community members, and neighbors.

We have only recently, as of August 2022, begun to see the \$302 million in investments from Measure 110 find purchase in our communities. We desperately need more public health resources to meet our current addiction crisis, which exploded during COVID and the introduction of fentanyl in this region. Let's focus on that, not finding ways to exacerbate our already-overburdened public defenders' caseloads.

You have received a great deal of thoughtful, well-evidenced testimony. I would like to uplift a few here, which I find compelling and persuasive.

Joy Alise Davis of Imagine Black says, "Historically, incarceration has never addressed housing or healthcare crises, and reverting to recriminalization will only perpetuate the suffering of vulnerable Oregonians."

Mercedes Elizade of Latino Network captures it well with this: "All the data and research continually and unequivocally tells us we need to get people into treatment faster and make it easier to stay connected to health and social services. Criminalization accomplishes neither of these things and in fact does the opposite."

And Isabella Villareal of Next Up shares, "HB 4002 proposal disqualifies people from expungement options if they have relapsed in the past, even though most people attempt recovery multiple times before success. 60% of people who start treatment in a given year do not complete it, whether treatment is voluntary or mandated. This could mean that a significant number of young people - who would be disproportionately Black, brown, poor, queer and trans, and disabled youth - would be incarcerated and have life-damaging criminal records because they relapse."

Please focus on what is beginning to work, which is more recovery resources, rather than what has never worked, which is addiction criminalization.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,
Steph Routh