

TO: Joint Committee on Addiction on Community Safety Response
FROM: *Poe Nicodemus*
DATE: 07 FEB 2024
RE: Oppose M110 Recriminalization Bills: HB 4002, HB 4036, SB 1555

Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Committee, for the record my name is Poe Nicodemus. I live in Multnomah county and I am a trial assistant at Multnomah Defenders Inc, a public defense firm.

I would like to state my strong opposition to HB 4002, HB 4036, and SB 1555. Oregon voters have made it clear that we wish to treat addiction & homelessness as public health issues. I am in support of full implementation of measure 110 and firmly opposed to bills which undermine and subvert our decision. We must not abandon years of work building effective systems of intervention and recovery.

As a legal clerk and a Portland resident I ask you to reject the failed approach of the so-called “war on drugs” and pursue measures which address the causes of drug abuse. Criminalizing the symptoms of addiction punishes people for their suffering. It is counter-productive and cruel to traumatize & isolate people in desperate need of stability & community. We want to see our state address the problem decisively by dedicating necessary resources and committing to a public-health approach. We need to invest in policies that fundamentally change the situation of our struggling neighbors and enable them to heal.

If HB 4002, HB 4036, or SB 1555 are passed, their implementation will pull funding and focus away from evidence-based solutions. Thousands of additional misdemeanor charges will reduce access to recovery services, as limited capacity to process cases will be stretched even thinner by an influx of criminal proceedings. Siphoning resources from necessary treatment into imprisonment, means-testing, or complex diversion programs is not just a waste of funding, but also the time, energy, and focus of people working in every part of our criminal justice system.

HB 4002, HB 4036, or SB 1555 are violations of public trust. Oregonians care for each other, and in passing measure 110 declared that we want our government to stop scapegoating individuals and instead work to resolve systemic issues. We need our representatives to follow through with solutions proven to save lives: housing, mobile crisis counseling, and healthcare.

Thank you.