

2/9/2024

Testimony in opposition of HB 4002

Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response

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

My name is Sam Guthman, my pronouns are she/her and I am the Policy Manager at APANO Communities United Fund (CUF) and APANO Action Fund (AF), sibling, culturally-specific organizations that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development and cultural work.

I am submitting written testimony to share my serious concerns about House Bill 4002 and urge the committee to oppose this regressive bill.

Arresting and jailing people for addiction has never worked, and will never work. In fact, criminalization has inflicted decades of government harm and violence on BIPOC communities further widening the gap between our elected offices and communities of colour. It is clear that this targeted and aggressive bill won't change the results of the state's addiction and drug issue.

The fact is, Portland police have the 5th highest arrest rate disparities in the county. People of color are disproportionately excluded from diversion. Under HB 4002, more Black, brown, and Indigenous people will be convicted, receive criminal records, and be incarcerated — which will lead to higher levels of drug addiction, overdose deaths, poverty, and homelessness, further plunging our state into a perspective of harm rather than help.

I urge you to reconsider this deeply flawed legislation. Don't abandon our racial justice values. Don't abandon the goal of a public health approach to addiction. Please do not support the criminalization provisions of HB 4002.

While I am grateful for this opportunity to share my opposition to HB 4002, I am surprised that lawmakers aren't providing more time for Oregonians to read the legislation and make their voices heard. This is a crisis decades in the making that deserves ample time for input and analysis. Too many lives are at stake to rush this 100+ page bill through without room for sufficient public input.

Sam Guthman
Policy Manager
APANO and APANO Action Fund