



# PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

**Submitted to the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response**

**February 7, 2024**

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 4002**

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Kropf, and Members of the Joint Committee,

For the record, my name is Shannon Wight, and I am the Deputy Director of Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ). At Partnership for Safety and Justice, we advocate for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, our work has promoted public safety with policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

**Partnership for Safety and Justice opposes HB 4002, which would recriminalize the possession of drugs to a Class C misdemeanor.** If criminalization worked, we would have seen addiction rates go down over the last 50 years of the failed war on drugs. Instead, our disinvestment in affordable housing and treatment is the cause of the current crisis we all agree needs to be addressed.

The recent research day long symposium on the impacts of Measure 110 found that the overdose crisis is one that coincided with fentanyl reaching the west coast. The symposium, and recent reports, have found that fentanyl and the lack of affordable housing and treatment are to blame for the issues we see on our streets, not Measure 110.

HB 4002 clearly intends to provide more treatment and more services. Such intent is appreciated. In Oregon's policy-making process, Partnership for Safety and Justice has repeatedly urged the Legislature to center the voices of people directly impacted by the issues being discussed in any workgroup, task force, or policy discussion. To create impactful policies that do not cause disproportionate harm for Black and brown people and in fact help support thriving communities of color we must center people with lived experience at these policy-making tables. Such work is even more important when the stakes are as high as they are with this bill. This process will lead to better solutions, and solutions that we can agree on.

Criminalization of drug use has shown for decades to lead to disproportionate incarceration of Black and brown people, which tears apart families, and leads to housing and job loss - the very things people need to live stable and thriving lives. We know that it's how these laws are enforced that creates disparities. The increased sentencing enhancements in the bill will also have a disproportionate impact for Oregonians of color.

We would encourage workgroups and Task Forces to center the voices of people directly impacted by policies being discussed, both now and moving forward. This will always be the best way to solve the crises on our streets now, and on all policy moving forward.