

Submitter: Brandon Potter

On Behalf Of: Black and brown Oregonians deserve better

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Oregonians were clear:

-We want people with addiction issues to be treated as neighbors, not criminals

-We want them to be supported and rehabilitated, not buried under more problems that make recovery even more difficult.

We want a healthy society that takes action to end preventable overdose deaths by utilizing proven harm reduction measures, including widespread narcan and drug testing availability. Safe injection sites and a regulated supply of drugs should also be goal to work towards that will save lives and reduce comorbidities of contaminated and mislabeled drugs that abound in prohibitions black markets.

I am disgusted by the willingness of so many Oregon politicians to dive headfirst into urging a re-escalation if the failed Drug War based on propaganda and fear. How about you follow the voters will by fully implimenting Measure 110 and working to make it better, rather than rushing a return to the same old failed civil rights abuses against citizens that define the Drug War?

Just like the hundreds of Oregonians who submitted testimony earlier this month against harmful criminalization proposals, including HB 4002 and HB 4036, I strongly urge lawmakers to follow the evidence and the data: decades of the failed war on drugs tell us that sending people to jail for having an addiction only ruins lives.

I've opposed HB 4002 from the start but I'm particularly frustrated by the -24 amendment, including the special interests behind it.

When I read that lawmakers invited prosecutors and law enforcement into closed door meetings to amend HB 4002, I knew the result would be harmful to the people left out of those "negotiations," including people with and communities with lived experience of disparities in the criminal justice system, the behavioral health system, and housing systems. Organizations representing Black and brown communities were shut out of the room.

HB 4002 -24 embraces a dangerous and damaging criminalization approach at the expense of the safety, health, and well-being of Black and brown communities. I strongly oppose HB 4002 for failing to consider the Oregonians most at-risk of over-policing and government harm: Black and brown people, Indigenous Oregonians,

low-income Oregonians, and rural Oregonians.

The latest version of HB 4002 -24 creates massive inequities between counties. People who live in counties without a deflection program will face immediate HB 4002 arrests while people living just a few miles away will be offered connection to treatment. Your zip code shouldn't determine your ability to access treatment services. An easy fix to this would be to simply require all counties to set up deflection programs.

HB 4002 -24 sets deflection programs in select counties up to fail - in the same way Oregon failed to implement Measure 110. For lower income Oregonians, the shortage of public defenders means cases will be dismissed with no connection to care, but leaving people with arrest records. And HB 4002 -24 recriminalizes addiction long before deflection programs will be set up.

HB 4002 -24 also falls short of investing in Oregon's woefully under resourced mental health and drug addiction treatment services. The status quo of providing just 50% of the capacity necessary to meet the substance use disorder services needed is unacceptable. People are desperate for treatment services. That's punishment enough - putting them in jail doesn't help anyone. If people using drugs are committing other crimes, such as theft or public drug use, enforce those crimes. There is no reason to reinstitute crimes around addictions themselves. These only prove to worsen the issue by driving it in the shadows and denying people access to support, community, and often their livelihoods and stability in housing due to intense financial burdens of being drawn into the legal system.

We must do better. And we must do better than HB 4002 -24