

Submitter: Yvonne Garcia

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

February 26, 2024

Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony strongly opposing criminalization of drug addiction and homelessness

Co-chair Lieber, co-chair Kropf, members of the committee, my name is Yvonne Garcia, my pronouns are she/her, and I am the Deputy Director at the ACLU of Oregon. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending and advancing democracy, civil liberties, and civil rights, with more than 27,000 members statewide.

Over twenty-five years ago, I started my career as a social worker working with chronically homeless adults struggling with addiction and mental health issues. When I arrived in Portland 20 years ago, I continued this work and continued to see how the revolving door of criminalizing poverty and drug addiction is a cycle that is nearly impossible to get out of without support, housing, and access to various types of treatment.

The proposal in HB 4002-24 is another step backwards. The proposal of jail time for small amounts of "suspected" possession is harmful to our communities and an already overburdened judicial system. Please do not vote on policies that will continue to perpetuate racist and biased actions like stop-and-frisk practices or leaving treatment decisions to prosecutors rather than the individual or their support systems.

Funding the criminal justice system has been the way it has been done for decades. Let's not continue with the same ineffective and expensive interventions but move towards what the research and experts tell us is needed: supportive housing, access to readily available treatment, non-police emergency response teams, and access to healthcare.

Please vote in support of the care our most vulnerable community members deserve

and need and vote no on HB 4002-24.

Thank you,

Yvonne Garcia
Deputy Director
ACLU of Oregon