

Submitter: Charlotte Maloney

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I understand legislators' motivation to pass a bill on this important issue this session. Everyone agrees: Something must be changed. But re-criminalizing is not the answer. People who use drugs need treatment, counseling, housing, and employment.

Please vote no on HB 4002-24. It would create injustice in our criminal system. As written, it would enact "geography-based" access to justice, which is no justice at all. Giving discretion to local police and sheriffs' departments means that someone addicted to drugs in one county may be arrested and left to suffer and potentially die in jail, while a person addicted to drugs in the next county over might be offered access to deflection and treatment services.

This bill also ignores the fact that there will be no public defense attorneys any time soon for the likely thousands of new victimless cases that re-criminalization will bring into the criminal system. This must be avoided.

Any form of criminalization must have government accountability measures designed to lessen the harms and violence of the criminal system, including requirements of 1/ deflection, 2/ planned implementation period, 3/ uniformity across jurisdictions throughout the state, 4/ possession in plain view, and 5/ sunset if/when the person successfully completes treatment and probation/parole.