

Submitter: Veronica Gallegos-Lozano

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

My name is Veronica Gallegos-Lozano and I have been a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for over 25 years and have worked in the Portland area emergency rooms as a Mental Health Therapist/Crisis Interventionist since 2006. I am pleading with you that you support HB 4002. I have seen first hand for years how methamphetamines and now fentanyl have ravaged our community. The passage of Measure 110, although well intended in theory, was a social experiment gone wrong. Measure 110 failed to recognize the inherent nature of addiction and the how utterly difficult it is stop using methamphetamine and fentanyl without mandated intervention. I have seen people come into the emergency room having overdosed and resuscitated back to life only to discharge so that they can go back to using or be caught trying to use drugs while in the ER. I've dealt with family members begging us to intervene with their addicted loved one, only to tell them that the laws tie our hands to force treatment. I have seen people brought into the ER by EMTS or police after running around in the community naked and out of the mind because the police have no other options than to bring them to the ER when in reality, all of us know that the person on drugs will be safe for a few hours before demanding discharge a few hours later and there is no legal ability force treatment that they desperately need.

Worst of all, I am tired and weary of being forced to become desensitized to this tragedy on our streets because Measure 110 has sent the message that people have the right to basically kill themselves on the streets and we as a society have to allow it. As a social worker and as someone who was raised to help my fellow man, Measure 110 has created a humanitarian crisis not only because it allowed our drug crisis to flourish unfettered, but because it has legally bound our capacity as human beings to intervene and help our fellow human. It has tried to tell us as a society that the addict on the street has the right destroy their life and we have to let them. This is insanity and the makings of a society where dehumanizing others becomes the norm. Measure 110 has tried to silence my empathy and compassion by trying to normalize the suffering on the streets and I refuse to normalize ignoring suffering even if using the criminal justice system is the only tool we have to enforce treatment. Addiction by default has led many to choose drugs over their children, their family, their livelihood and their sanity. Measure 110 supporters are not only delusional in thinking that someone in the depths of their addiction will CHOOSE treatment and endure excruciating withdrawals by choice is ignorant. Measure 110 removed a major mechanism to mandate treatment = the criminal justice system. We must criminalize drug use only as a tool to save our fellow man and not punish.

I do agree with the intent to offer treatment over jail, you have to utilize the criminal

justice system to start that chain of events. I trust that our legislators will rewrite the law to offer treatment FIRST before jail is ever the final outcome. Oregon has to stop being a political guinea pig by out of state interests. Please support HB 4002 so that we normalize helping our fellow man, their families and our community. It's time to bring healing to our communities by amending Measure 110. Thank you.