

Submitter: Elyce M Benham MS
On Behalf Of: No recriminalization
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Measure: HB4002

Dear Oregon Lawmakers,

I strongly oppose HB 4002-24.

Oregon needs proven, real solutions to drug addiction and homelessness instead of the false promises of criminalization and jails. These solutions include more treatment, housing, prevention programs, community revitalization, and non-police mobile crisis response teams like Portland Street Response and CAHOOTS.

According to legal experts working with the ACLU of Oregon, HB 4002-24 in practice won't be much different from the regressive, harsh policies pushed by the so-called "Fix and Improve Ballot Measure 110" interest group, which is led by the former head of Oregon prisons and funded by billionaires.

It is mind boggling to me that Democratic legislators are working with Republicans to create the following injustices in our criminal system:

- Making it optional, not mandatory, for counties, police, and prosecutors to create and engage in programs that deflect people away from jail into treatment. This is a recipe for disaster and discriminatory treatment
- Encouraging harassing, dangerous and destructive police practices similar to stop-and-frisk.
- Ignoring that adding thousands of low-level, victimless cases into the criminal system, which already does not have enough defense attorneys, will destabilize courts and harm people who need attorneys and victims even more.

At the very least, any form of criminalization must have government accountability measures designed to lessen the harms and violence of the criminal system, including:

- Required Deflection
- Planned Implementation Period
- Possession in Plain View
- Sunset

I adamantly oppose any and all actions by lawmakers to arrest and jail Oregonians experiencing drug addiction. Criminalization is not a real solution to drug addiction or homelessness.

The war on drugs and mass incarceration is the new Jim Crow. This is a system of control that has shattered the lives of millions of Americans – especially young Black and brown men.

The time is always right to do what is right. Please vote your conscience. Stand up against systemic racism.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 4002-24.