

Submitter: Michael Gibbons

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I am heartened somewhat that the legislature is considering amending the well intentioned but ill-thought out Measure 110. The rampant drug use that plagues Portland and many other towns and cities in Oregon is the direct result of ignorance of human nature in general and of addiction in particular. It is a mental health issue first and foremost. Yet 110 assumes rational behavior from addicts in its expectation of the results of decriminalization of possession and use of illegal drugs. Surely given the opportunity to choose a path to recovery who wouldn't? This is 110's fundamental failure. The reality is a vast majority of addicts will not seek help without a stick as well as a carrot. That stick needs to be at the very least changing possession of illegal drugs to a Class A misdemeanor and the certainty of jail time. Only then does the offer of treatment and if that's chosen the provision of housing as well (and housing needs to also be contingent on staying in treatment and then some sort of retesting over time to become a possible avenue to recovery. (the unspoken irony here is the marketing campaign of 110 is that it would, by decriminalizing the use and possession of illegal drugs reduce crime...in fact, its done the complete opposite) Yes, jail is not necessarily a path to recovery, but it can be for some, for others it can be the bottom that they need to hit that makes the difficult path of sobriety appear in a better light, but drug use on our city streets should in fact be a crime, not only in and of itself, but also in the myriad other crimes that attend to its use. I was in downtown again this morning and it in and of itself makes this argument of the complete failure of 110's intended results. I am writing from personal experience of addiction.