

Submitter: Brent Norman Jr
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002 -24
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Measure: HB4002

I am a constituent and advocate for community safety for all Oregonians. I am disappointed and saddened to see our state pursue harmful criminalization policies instead of taking meaningful action to increase access to addiction treatment services and housing for Oregonians.

I strongly urge lawmakers to follow the evidence and the data: Decades of failed drug war policies tell us that sending people to jail for having an addiction will not solve our problems.

M110 and decriminalized drug possession did not fail. But Oregon never fully committed to implementing it, leading to a lack of needed support for those struggling with addiction. That's why I strongly oppose HB 4002 and the -24 amendment.

Addiction is a health issue, not a crime, but HB 4002 -24 criminalizes people who are suffering from two crises: addiction and Oregon's gaps in services.

A return to criminalizing addiction is dangerous. We know from our country's recent history and failed drug war policies that communities of color and other historically underserved populations will be disproportionately impacted and most at-risk of over-policing and incarceration.

The addiction crisis demands action, but we cannot punish people for our state's failures. People need rapid access to care, mobile crisis outreach, and housing solutions. And most critically, Oregonians need more treatment options. Many of these efforts are underway - due largely to Measure 110 as enacted by Oregon voters - but given that the gaps in services were so vast, there's much more to be done.

Real solutions exist. In the meantime, we cannot punish the people who are victims of our service gaps. I believe it would be appropriate to require all addicts to attend a drug rehab facility, for at least three times, prior to the eventual possibility of criminal action taking place. Immediate criminalization will result in more crime, as addicts will remain addicts and continue to commit crimes to support their habit. Plus, housing options will no longer be available to them. They will remain unhoused, and will feel they have no other option but to turn to drugs in an attempt to relieve the stress of living on the streets. I know, I've been in both situations - I'm a recovered alcoholic and have been both unhoused and am a convicted felon. I was unable to obtain housing, and would have remained unhoused were it not for several people stepping

up to speak on my behalf; people whom the majority of addicts do not have. So I urge you to oppose HB 4002 -24 and to support continued investment in essential services.

Sincerely,

Brent Norman Jr