

Submitter: Kaliko Castille

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Honorable Co-Chairs, distinguished members of the Joint Committee,

My name is Kaliko Castille and I'm a resident of Milwaukie.

I write tonight to oppose HB4002.

Addressing the complex challenge of drug possession and addiction in our communities requires not just understanding and empathy, but also bold and innovative solutions. The temptation to revert to criminalization as a means to manage drug addiction fails to recognize the depth of the issue and misses an opportunity for genuine, long-lasting change.

The heart of the matter extends beyond a mere desire to eliminate addiction; were that the sole objective, our strategies would be firmly rooted in evidence-based practices aimed at treatment and prevention. The inclination towards recriminalization, driven by a desire to make addiction less visible, looks back to a time before Measure 110 with rose colored glasses, confusing addiction's visibility with its prevalence.

In this critical moment, it is imperative that the legislature's response is as bold as the issue is large. Merely moving problems out of sight cannot be the extent of our ambition. Oregon deserves and requires solutions that are innovative, that challenge the status quo, and that place compassion and effectiveness at the forefront of public policy.

Investing in publicly funded safe consumption sites, complete with wraparound services and case management staff, is an example of the bold thinking we need. This approach not only addresses the issue of public drug use but also offers a supportive pathway to recovery, demonstrating a commitment to health, safety, and compassion over punitive measures.

The discourse surrounding the re-criminalization of drug possession risks painting a picture of failure tied to recent reforms, rather than recognizing the need for a nuanced understanding of addiction and the systemic changes necessary to combat it. We must focus on building a supportive infrastructure that confronts the root causes of drug addiction and offers individuals a chance at recovery rather than a path back into the criminal justice system.

As the legislature deliberates on HB4002, I strongly urge a consideration of long-term strategies that embrace bold and innovative solutions. Our approach should prioritize the health, dignity, and well-being of our communities, steering clear of repeating past mistakes. Let's seize this opportunity to lead with courage and compassion, setting a precedent for how we address drug addiction in Oregon and beyond.

Mahalo for your consideration and I urge you once again to vote NO on HB 4002.

- Kaliko Castille