

Submitter: Nuhamin Eiden

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Co-chairs Lieber and Kropf and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Nuhamin Eiden, Deputy Director at Unite Oregon, a membership organization led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty.

I am here in opposition to House Bill 4002 and all related amendments. Criminalization inflicted decades of government harm and violence on Black and brown communities.

In my previous testimony, I shared with you the story of my little brother, who would still be alive today if we invested in resources to care for all Oregonians instead of jailing them.

This committee pledged to work with impacted communities and to work on this solution with us at the table yet, under HB 4002, more Black, brown, and Indigenous people will be convicted, get criminal records, and be incarcerated — which will lead to higher levels of drug addiction, overdose deaths, poverty, and homelessness. How can you say we were at the table when we were the ones on the menu?

HB 4002 will also dramatically increase the burden on the public defense system that is already in crisis, adding thousands of new people to caseloads. For people that get thrown in jail under HB 4002, they will face tortuous withdrawals and a higher risk of overdose and death. For people that get thrown back on the streets, they'll continue to struggle to find access to available treatment services.

In short, criminalization will put more lives at risk. According to a recent New York Times story, "Every region across the country shows a nearly identical skyrocketing death toll when fentanyl saturates its market...Washington State is an especially interesting example of how overdose rates rose most sharply after criminal penalties were restored in the state...Measure 110 allocated new spending to harm reduction initiatives that made the overdose antidote naloxone more widely available. A modeling study showed that without this change, even more lives would have been lost to fentanyl overdoses." Full story:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/05/opinion/oregon-decriminalization-drugs-reversal.html>

I urge you to vote no on this deeply flawed legislation. Don't abandon our racial

justice values. Don't abandon the goal of a public health approach to addiction. Please don't support the criminalization provisions of HB 4002.

While I am grateful for this opportunity to share my opposition to HB 4002, I am disappointed that lawmakers aren't providing more time for Oregonians to read the legislation and make their voices heard. The legislature's short session is just one month long. This is a crisis decades in the making that deserves ample time for input and analysis. Too many lives are at stake to rush this 100+ page bill through without room for sufficient public input.

Thank you.