

VOTE NO to HB 4002

Co-Chairs Leiber and Kropf and Members of the Committee:

I am deeply disappointed to see Oregon pursue re-criminalization and failed policies from the “war on drugs” 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.

Addiction is a health issue, but HB 4002 -24 criminalizes people who are suffering from two crises: addiction and Oregon's gaps in services. Jail, arrests, and over-policing will neither support folks experiencing addiction nor solve this issue. We already know, based on our country's recent history and failed drug war policies that BIPOC and other communities facing ongoing systemic oppression will be disproportionately impacted and most at-risk of over-policing and incarceration.

M110 and decriminalized drug possession did not fail. Oregon has not had the time to fully implement it, leading to a lack of needed support for those struggling with addiction. I have seen loved ones struggle with addiction without adequate support because of decades of disinvestment and stigma. Now instead of doing the necessary work to continue investing in services and support, lawmakers are reacting to a well-funded ballot initiative threat from wealthy donors and corporate interests. That's why I strongly oppose HB 4002 and the -24 amendment.

The addiction crisis demands action, but we cannot punish people for our state's failures. People need rapid access to more care and treatment options, mobile crisis outreach, and housing solutions. Individuals and communities that are most impacted by addiction should be leading the solutions Oregon implements. 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. I urge you to oppose HB 4002 and the -24 amendments and to support continued investment in our communities and essential services.

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