



Date: February 26, 2024

To: Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

From: Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA)

RE: Oppose House Bill 4002-24 & Amendments

Chairs Lieber and Kropf, members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA), we are writing to oppose House Bill 4002, and its introduced amendments. OHEA is one of nine regional health equity coalitions across Oregon and we serve Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. We are a people of color-led collaborative, organized to center and uplift the wisdom of our communities of color through racial justice informed health equity policies and practices as part of the movement to dismantle white supremacy and shift the imbalance of power.

As a health equity advocacy organization, we are concerned that despite the overwhelming amount of testimony, both verbal and written, submitted in opposition of HB 4002, the committee continues to recommend treatment not re-criminalization. The committee continues to introduce amendments that are inadequate and harmful approaches that further criminalize our most vulnerable communities. HB 4002 amendments will result in more people being policed, people going to jail, more people being harmed, more people being displaced, more families being disrupted, and more people dying from addiction and overdose.

Rather than punishing the vulnerable, we deserve real solutions that help our communities instead of returning to ineffective, failed policies and practices. HB 4002 amendments enable greater inequities and disparities in rural areas of Oregon. The current system has created a backlog and waitlist across the state for access to care, ignoring solutions like increasing withdrawal management, detox, recovery, sober housing, and other services.

We know HB 4002 will inflict more government harm and violence on Black and brown communities who will be arrested at higher rates and face incarceration and harsher sentencing. This is reflected in the alarming court backlogs and impact on individuals who cannot afford a lawyer or access to resources.

We demand legislation that addresses our communities' concerns, makes deflection mandatory, with a planned implementation period, and includes a sunset for lawmakers to review the intended and unintended consequences of this bill. Without these actions, our elected leaders continue to move us further away from connecting people with treatment and housing.

These past mistakes are well documented and the legislature has the power to learn from these experiences and not repeat history. With this, OHEA strongly urges you to oppose HB 4002 and its amendments.



Thank you for your time.

Oregon Health Equity Alliance