

Submitter: Liora Berry

On Behalf Of: Oregonians left out of the room

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

I am a constituent who is extremely disappointed and saddened to see state leaders pursue harmful criminalization policies instead of taking meaningful action to increase access to treatment services and housing for Oregonians.

I strongly oppose HB 4002 for failing to consider the Oregonians most at-risk of over-policing and government harm: Black and brown people, Indigenous Oregonians, low-income Oregonians, and rural Oregonians. HB 4002 -24 embraces a dangerous and damaging criminalization approach at the expense of the safety, health, and well-being of Black and brown communities. That's unacceptable.

Just like the hundreds of Oregonians who submitted testimony earlier this month against harmful criminalization proposals, including HB 4002 and HB 4036, I strongly urge lawmakers to follow the evidence and the data: decades of the failed war on drugs tell us that sending people to jail for having an addiction only ruins lives.

The latest version of HB 4002 -24 also creates massive inequities between counties. People who live in counties without a deflection program will face immediate HB 4002 arrests while people living just a few miles away will be offered connection to treatment. Your zip code shouldn't determine your ability to access treatment services. An easy fix to this would be to simply require all counties to set up deflection programs.

I've heard legislators call HB 4002 a treatment-first approach, but that's simply not true. The bill as written will send people struggling with addiction to jail and saddle them with criminal records. HB 4002 fails to meet the tremendous need for detox and treatment services across our state and represents a costly and damaging return to the war on drugs - no matter what you call it.

Oregonians deserve better than HB 4002.

I dedicated over 25 years to help people who were experiencing housing instability and homelessness in the PortlandMetro area. As providers we knew the sad reality that it was easier to "score" drugs than to "score" treatment. Especially for those with mental health issues or gaps in English language written literacy. Too many programs require written literacy and the ability to participate in group services.

For those impacted by addiction it was essential to approach their struggles as the health issue it was. This meant helping them now vs demanding they summon up a

miracle and enter recovery while still in active crisis. Decriminalizing drug use will only result in more people experiencing homelessness, and more people dying from overdose. Shame does not promote recovery-it only erodes trust and intensifies the risk of higher risk behaviors. Yes it is sad and concerning to see people use drugs in view of others but criminalizing drugs will only make the problems worse. Invest in people and the expand and deepen the range of addiction treatment services available. People and families are depending on you.