

Submitter: Riah Safady  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure: SB1553

I am a resident of Jackson County and am writing to express my opposition to the proposed SB 1553. In our community criminalization of drugs has not ever solved issues of addiction, houselessness or mental health. Measure 110 would have never been passed if what we had been doing over the past 50+ years had actually been effective. Personally, there are a number of people in my life that have and continue to struggle with substance use disorder and none of them would benefit from a law enforcement response to behaviors that are often connected to the trauma they have experienced. Decades of War on Drugs legislation and policies have made very clear that criminalization of drugs has and continues to target Black and Brown communities and men more specifically. In Oregon and across the nation, we see higher rates of incarceration for Black and Brown people than for whites in relation to percentages of the population. This is a reality despite ongoing data that shows no significant differences in drug usage across race. Re-criminalizing small amounts of drugs in Oregon will only continue these racist practices that disproportionately impact communities, families and individuals of color. Data also shows that individuals who are incarcerated have a higher chance of using drugs and alcohol to deal with the trauma that occurs in jails and prisons, and there is an increased chance their children will also be involved with the criminal justice system. Additionally, while there is an effort to hide this data from the public, Oregon's jails and prisons are dealing with an increase of substances within them, and we know that Oregonians are overdosing while in custody. If criminalizing personal use and possession of small amounts of drugs was effective, this would not be happening. I urge you as our legislators to listen to the many voices and stories across our state that amplify the need for less criminal justice involvement and more resources for expanded and integrated treatment options. Rather than funneling limited resources into criminalizing behaviors of people who have and continue to experience trauma, invest in treatment, invest in affordable housing, invest in childcare, education, food resources... invest in our community's health and well-being. Imagine what is possible in our state if ALL Oregonians had access to everything each one of us needs to be healthy, well, engaged and contributing.