

Submitter: Jules Simonis  
On Behalf Of: Addiction is not a crime  
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response  
Measure: HB4002

I am a constituent and advocate for community safety for all Oregonians. I am disappointed and saddened to see our state pursue harmful criminalization policies 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.

We live in a country with the highest rate of incarceration and it is estimated about 65% of that is related to drug addiction. But this is not just a statistic, most of us know someone personally who has battled addiction. The War on Drugs and the opioid epidemic and their incredibly harmful repercussions continue to plunge us into late stage capitalism, massive grief, and homelessness.

M110 and decriminalized drug possession did not fail. But Oregon never fully committed to implementing it, leading to a lack of needed support for those struggling with addiction. That's why I strongly oppose HB 4002 and the -24 amendment.

Addiction is a health issue, not a crime, but HB 4002 -24 criminalizes people who are suffering from two crises: addiction and Oregon's gaps in services.

A return to criminalizing addiction is dangerous. We know from our country's recent history and failed drug war policies that communities of color and other historically underserved populations will be disproportionately impacted and most at-risk of over-policing and incarceration.

The addiction crisis demands action, but we cannot punish people for our state's failures. People need rapid access to care, mobile crisis outreach, and housing solutions. And most critically, Oregonians need more treatment options. 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. In the meantime, we cannot punish the people who are victims of our service gaps. I urge you to oppose HB 4002 -24 and to support continued investment in essential services. Services like food, healthcare, and most importantly housing.

Sincerely,

Jules Simonis