

Reimagine Oregon

Dear Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response members and Co-Chairs,

The current proceedings to develop and coming vote to pass HB 4002 are a painful reopening of the wounds of the failed War On Drugs approach to solving our nation's addiction crisis. It is a reminder that the interests of those most affected, those most connected to serve, and those outside of law enforcement power structure will remain witness to harm and misallocation of public resources.

Oregon voters overwhelmingly supported decriminalization and centered a public health approach when they passed Measure 110. They made it clear that over 50 years of punitive action has not created the infrastructure that is needed to support our community and family members in need of care. Measure 110 was a pathway to building care facilities, developing the workforce, and creating effective partnerships between the many interests that wish to see our streets free of people wrapped in the trauma and harm of addiction. We have invested almost no time in making the voters' choice come to fruition. We are taking a massive step back, with no clear plan to move to a better future.

This decision is being made without the voice of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color being centered in the process. Our communities will feel the overwhelming weight of this choice. This choice will not solve our collective issue, it will not improve our community's capacity serve those in addiction, and we will be left on our own to handle the pain it will cause.

Our current public defense system, addiction support services, and social services are not funded or equipped to meet the demand that the daily arrests will generate. The default outcome will be county jails filled to the brim with those in substance withdrawal, without adequate care facilities, and insufficient medical staff. The people will be in pain, but the streets will be clear. I suppose that is the priority.

The policy decisions of the past have created our current circumstances. Our lack of affordable housing, our acceptance of broad poverty, and lack of quality treatment facilities is a result of decades of disregard of these issues. As a society we have centered our fears, the priorities of moneyed interests, and continue to invest in the idea the law enforcement is the only legitimate source of relief.

We have other options, we have the means to build a better system, we lack courage to get it done.

Be well,

Justice Rajee

Executive Director Reimagine Oregon Project