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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Re-criminalizing drug possession in the midst of an overdose epidemic is like banning camping after an earthquake.

There is no meaningful evidence that Measure 110 has increased overdose rates. Fentanyl, a much deadlier opioid than anything previously on the market, was introduced to Oregon around the time Measure 110 was passed. And the double blow of Covid-19 resulted in surging rates of poverty and homelessness. And this has all occurred in the context of overdose rates that have steadily increased throughout our embarrassing and ineffective "war on drugs."

The untold millions, if not billions spent on our war on drugs has not solved the problem.

Look to the open drug use and overdoses in the streets that opponents of measure 110 have decried as evidence of the policy's failure. These are not the consequences of decriminalization, but our communities as they have always been, now visible to the many Oregonians for the first time. If Oregon is offended by the sight of its drug-addicted residents, then our funds should go towards shelters and housing. These methods are actually proven to be effective in reducing substance abuse, as opposed to incarceration, which not only makes the problem worse, but does so with an average price tag of nearly \$44,000 per inmate per year (Federal Register 2021). This is not even considering the trauma inflicted on convicts, and on the families and communities broken by punishment-centered "treatment."

Measure 110 represents a foundation from which our state can lead the nation in effective drug policy. We do not gain anything by going backwards. Yes, we are in the midst of a crisis. And we have been for at least half a century, since the start of the "war on drugs." So let's do what works in disasters: let's relieve the problems, address the causes, and provide care instead of punishment.

Source Cited:

[https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/22/2023-20585/annual-determination-of-average-cost-of-incarceration-fee-coif#:~:text=Based%20on%20FY%202021%20data,%2437%2C012%20\(%24101.40%20per%20day\).](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/22/2023-20585/annual-determination-of-average-cost-of-incarceration-fee-coif#:~:text=Based%20on%20FY%202021%20data,%2437%2C012%20(%24101.40%20per%20day).)