

Submitter: Mike Allen

On Behalf Of: Addiction is not a crime

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

"I am a constituent who is extremely concerned that our state and city has been used as a testing grounds for a dangerous experiment in drug policy. The people who conceived of this radical experiment should be ashamed of themselves for the harm they have caused and continue to cause, but in fact they just double down on failure.

Where we were once promoted for a high quality of life in a safe, clean and friendly city, we now have people dying by the score of drug overdoses, and stealing anything they can get to support their addiction until then. We have a city budget shortfall here in Portland, where we should have a surplus but for the services we must provide to keep our burgeoning population of people experiencing drug addiction alive and in some form of shelter.

The war on drugs was not a perfect solution. Many warriors against drugs have been far too zealous in their approach. But what does it mean to say "it's never worked"? That it did not end addiction? Plainly, it did not, could not. There is not likely any approach that would end addiction. The goal should be for addiction to do the least harm possible, as in the least number of people addicted, with the fewest overdoses, and the least spillover effect to the non-addicted population. In all of these measures, measure 110 has performed much worse than criminalization.

Ask yourself: is jail really the worst thing that could happen to someone who lives hand to mouth, smoking fentanyl or methamphetamine on the street? I see these people and they look absolutely miserable. Jail may not be the ideal solution, but it is almost certainly better than this wanton neglect masquerading as empathy."