



February 28, 2024

Dear Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response,

On behalf of Oregon Latino Health Coalition, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the health of Latinos through policy, advocacy, and prevention, we are writing to express our strong opposition to House Bill 4002.

First and foremost, HB 4002 poses significant risks to our already strained public defender system. Oregon is facing a public defender crisis, with thousands of individuals already burdening caseloads. By adding more people to these caseloads through the recriminalization of substance use, HB 4002 will only exacerbate this crisis, leading to inadequate legal representation and a denial of justice for many individuals.

Furthermore, HB 4002 is not only risky but also cruel and harmful. Without sufficient access to treatment services, individuals struggling with addiction will be sent to jail or back onto the streets, where the risk of overdose and death increases. This will disproportionately impact Black and Brown people, Oregonians experiencing homelessness and poverty, and rural Oregonians, perpetuating existing disparities in our criminal justice system.

According to data Latinos, especially those who are in poverty, tend to suffer disproportionately from a number of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, HB 4002 is destructive in its long-term consequences. Individuals arrested, charged, and released back onto the streets will face significant barriers to accessing housing, government assistance, jobs, and education due to a life-damaging criminal record, simply for having an addiction.

Lastly, HB 4002 is deadly. The proposed recriminalization of substance use goes against evidence-based harm reduction approaches and will only contribute to the rising death toll from overdoses. The Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community needs more investment in treatment and the implementation of public services.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.mentalhealthportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Mental-Health-Service-Disparities-of-Latino-Oregonians-OCHA-Final-Report-St.-Amour.pdf>



Culturally responsive treatment and bilingual providers are integral to reducing drug addiction and creating healthier communities in Oregon.

In conclusion, we urge you to oppose HB 4002 and to prioritize evidence-based approaches to addressing substance use disorder in our state. We need comprehensive investments in treatment, harm reduction, and support services to address the root causes of addiction and save lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Quiroz", is displayed on a light gray rectangular background.

Olivia Quiroz  
Executive Director  
Oregon Latino Health Coalition