



PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

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Submitted to the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response
February 28, 2024**

With the passage of M110 in 2020, Oregon became the first state in the country to officially end the war on drugs, a 50-year web of policies and practices targeting Black and brown communities.

Ending criminalization of possession of drugs and funding a health care model for addiction was an important first step in healing the communities most harmed by the war on drugs. It's important to remember that M110 only decriminalized possession of small amounts of drugs - much of the testimony and reporting has been about drug dealing, car thefts and other crimes. All of those things are currently illegal and have always been.

Turning to an entirely new approach would be challenging under any circumstances, but the measure passed right around the same time as other significant events in Oregon. Here is a brief overview of those events:

November 2020, Measure 110 passed

February 2020, the first reported COVID cases hit Oregon and by March 23 residents were ordered to stay at home. This caused a ripple effect of lack of services, lack of jobs and over time, increased mental health and addiction crises.

January 2021, fentanyl reaches the west coast.¹

February 2021, drug decriminalization passed by M110 goes into effect.²

June 30, 2021 COVID restrictions in Oregon are lifted.

June 2022, funds for M110 services are distributed.

¹https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.cfsecosystem.com/m110/Presentations/Panel+1_Del+Pozo.pdf

²https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.cfsecosystem.com/m110/Presentations/Panel+0_Overview.pdf

September 2023, Several ballot measures are filed to repeal or significantly change M110.³

October 2023, the Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response has its first meeting to consider responses to the addiction crisis, perceived failures of M110, and the threat of ballot measures.

February 27, 2024, HB 4002 is passed out of the Joint Committee.

The timing of the passage of M110 was unfortunate. The pandemic hit and wreaked havoc on all of our systems, and made it much more difficult for this major policy shift to be a success. The pandemic slowed the work and also caused loss, trauma and isolation that deepened our state and our country's mental health and addiction crises. It led to a spike in crime that was seen across the nation, and sadly also here in Oregon.

Because people saw crime and addiction go up during the pandemic, and politically motivated dark money groups spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to blame M110 for our state's problems, the public largely associated these trends with the passage of Measure 110.

But Measure 110 is not to blame for these systemic problems. A recent study done by Portland State found:⁴

- There was an uptick in property crime right after M110, but similar rises were seen in states that didn't decriminalize drugs;
- Impacts of Covid and fentanyl drove overdose deaths, following a pattern well established in other states that did not decriminalize .

There are solutions that exist that will help to solve the addiction crisis in our state:

- Increased peer outreach to help people get into treatment when they want it, as is currently being piloted in Portland;
- Standing up treatment services, stable housing and support services for our community members struggling with addiction;
- Investments in housing and harm reduction strategies (e.g.naloxone).

³<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/09/20/coalition-targets-oregon-voters-and-lawmakers-in-new-effort-to-overhaul-measure-110/>

⁴ https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1118&context=ccj_fac

Additionally, we are already beginning to see positive changes in our communities as we get further out from the pandemic and the infusion of resources from M110 go into effect.

- Some crime rates are starting to fall. This is important to remember because people will claim that recriminalizing drugs caused crime to fall when it was already falling.
- \$302 million has been allocated for addiction recovery and harm reduction services under Measure 110 so far — that's five times more than what Oregon currently spends on non-Medicaid funding for addiction services. Without M110 this funding would never have happened.

Instead, HB 4002 is standing up a system that will be complicated to implement and relies on resources we don't currently have and can't get quickly. That is the exact same critique leveled on M110. M110 is starting to work - we are getting resources where they are needed. HB 4002 creates more work for systems like public defense where we already have cases being dismissed for not having an attorney.

We have had some tough years since the pandemic, but are starting to recover. HB 4002 is overly complicated, too costly to effectively implement, takes resources away from more impactful services and will cause harm to people struggling with addiction, particularly in communities of color.

We can hold people accountable for harm caused without making it more difficult for people to build successful lives - which is what criminalizing addiction has done for the last 50 years.