

HB 4002

When the people of Oregon passed Measure 110 as a ballot measure, they did so out of compassion for people struggling with pain and addiction. They did so with the intention that access to needed services such as substance abuse treatment would be available to all. They know, and we know, that addiction is a public health issue.

We have been working hard to expand access to treatment and services, along with affordable housing and healthcare, in the last session, and that work continues this session, and will continue. We just approved a significant investment in recovery housing and services in the allocations outlined in HB 5204.

The people of Oregon have also expected that we would seek a compassionate path that would urge those suffering from SUD to seek treatment and recovery.

Colleagues, this bill offers a path forward that combines multiple entryways into that care through outpatient or inpatient treatment. It requires the offer of deflection, and multiple points of exit from the criminal justice system, with automatic expungement of charges regardless of path chosen.

Do I have concerns? Certainly I do – grave concerns. Few of us are naïve enough to believe that justice has always been equally applied in this state, or elsewhere. Even earlier today on this Senate floor, we heard a statement made by one of our colleagues that racism is rare. The lived experience of many Oregonians would argue quite differently. Their voices must be heard.

I am glad to see that this bill requires collection and review of data on racial disparities in enforcement of this proposed legislation. We must be profoundly diligent in ensuring that this is done.

Colleagues, at the end of the day, I want every Oregonian who is struggling with addiction to find the support they need for recovery. I want our communities to be safe spaces for all people. I want everyone to have access to affordable housing, physical and mental healthcare, educational opportunity, good jobs, and retirement with dignity.

I was an aye vote on HB 4002, BUT we have much more work to do. Thank you.