



**SENATOR ELIZABETH STEINER
DISTRICT 17**

Dear Secretary Rutledge,

March 1, 2024

I am writing you today to explain my “aye” vote on House Bill 4002.

First, I want to be clear that I agree with the intent of Ballot Measure 110. As a family physician I have seen firsthand the devastation that occurs when people struggle with substance use disorder for not only the individual but for their families and communities. I firmly believe substance use disorder is a health issue and I agreed with decriminalization as part of Ballot Measure 110.

Many of the problems we are seeing today were caused by the immediate decriminalization before the infrastructure to support treatment necessary to treat substance use disorder was put in place. These problems were further complicated by the coinciding first-in-a-century global pandemic and descent of fentanyl upon Oregon. Supporters of the measure could not have predicted the convergence of these events that exacerbated the crisis we are seeing today.

Oregon has long under-invested in behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment which could have prevented much of this crisis. There have been significant investments made since the passage of Ballot Measure 110, and we are only now able to see the beginnings of their impacts.

I share the concerns of my colleagues about the disproportionate impacts of recriminalization and lack of treatment will have on people of color in Oregon. In committee, I asked if there are ways to mitigate these disproportionate impacts to emphasize the necessity of a holistic approach that includes culturally appropriate treatment options so individuals can succeed. The data tracking that is part of this bill is imperative so the legislature can be informed of any unintended impacts on Oregonians. I will be watching the data closely and will work for substantive changes should it become clear that BIPOC communities are being apprehended or adjudicated disproportionately.

This is not a perfect bill, yet we must not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. The threat of a ballot measure, which was created without public input and would require a two-thirds vote of the legislature to make any changes, is real. This bill is necessary and why I voted “aye.”

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Elizabeth Steiner