

TRAVIS E. NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 44



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 29, 2024

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation on HB 4002A

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I voted no on HB 4002A because I believe it as amended, falls short of the comprehensive strategy needed to address the shortcomings of Measure 110 and I fear that it may be taking us a step backward in some respects.

When Measure 110 passed, Oregon's largest city was ranked 5th worse in the nation for racial disparities in arrests. Since then, Black Oregonians received a disproportionate number of Measure 110 citations. The data suggest HB 4002A will still disproportionality impact people within low income and BIPOC communities. The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission stated that the predicted convictions for Black/African American individuals exceeds what would be proportional to our representation compared to our white counterparts by approximately 39% for the same offense. This is in congruence to Black people being incarcerated in Oregon prisons and jails at about 5.4 times the rate of our Caucasian counterparts. The inequality is also seen amongst the LatinX population. This disparity underscores a continuing trend: BIPOC and low-income communities may continue to bear the heaviest burden of our drug policies, with incarceration rates that fail to address the root causes of drug addiction. I was also disappointed to hear that BIPOC stakeholders felt left out of the conversation in the final weeks of negotiation as the new compromise amendments were introduced. This signals to me that HB 4002A may lack an equity lens and the deep insight needed for lasting change.

I do believe that HB 4002A has a lot of good in it and is a notable start to the conversation, but I was on board with a bill that committed to deflection and kept people out of the criminal justice system unless they failed to take an off ramp. Criminalization for drug addiction is not the answer and I look forward to working toward a more inclusive and holistic approach that reflects the needs and values of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland