



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

February 7, 2024

To: Co-Chairs Sen Lieber and Kropf and Committee Members  
[Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response](#)

Re: [HB4002-2](#) - Relating to the Addiction Crisis in this State - **Support**

The League of Women Voters supports HB 4002-2, which would classify low levels of drug use as a Class C misdemeanor while providing a variety of options for expunging the charge.

**The League of Women Voters recognizes that substance abuse/addictions are public health issues, not crimes. The League supports reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law enforcement programs and policies. Further, the League supports:**

- **Training police to identify individuals with mental health conditions, disabilities, or substance abuse/addiction, so that officers will request support from appropriate medical and mental health professionals, with the goal of diverting those individuals into treatment instead of jail.**
- **Considering community-based treatment programs and other alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.**

As public health crises increasingly reveal, a health program should protect the health of its most vulnerable populations, urban and rural, in order to protect the health of everyone.

The current situation in Oregon is complex.

- The mental health system is being strengthened, but it still is [inadequate for accommodating the needs of Oregonians](#).
- Oregon's judicial system cannot accommodate a large increase in people who are incarcerated. In 2022, the state had only [31% of the public defenders](#) needed.
- More time is needed to gather accurate data in order to fully assess Measure 110.

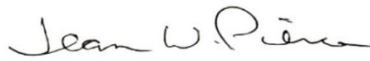
Each of the parts of the problem will not be solved overnight. And yet the public is demanding immediate solutions to the current public health crisis.

It appears that HB 4002-2 offers a reasonable solution. While it would increase the penalty to a Class C misdemeanor, arrest would not necessarily lead to incarceration. People can avoid a charge by enrolling in a deflection program. Further, it offers a variety of paths to expungement of the record, and it provides for collecting data which will permit appropriate solutions. We appreciate that the bill would make grants available to increase the capacity of mental health facilities. We support increased funding to adequately meet the behavioral health needs of people with substance use disorder and increased funding for our public safety agencies as they help address this public health crisis.

While we wish there were more time to gather accurate data to fully evaluate Measure 110, we believe that HB4002-2 has the potential to address the problems without creating lasting problems for people possessing low levels of drugs.



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