

Vote NO on HB2797

HB2979 is another stupid salvo in the disastrous war on drugs, and will cause far more harm than good. Mandatory minimum sentences - in this bill from over 4-10 years - have never worked as a deterrent of drug use or its associated harms. Given what we know about racial disparities in policing, prosecution and sentencing, there is no question that this is a racist bill: it WILL have racially disparate impacts on communities of color in Oregon should it be signed into law. People who use drugs often become involved in the black market of drug sales in order to be able to continue to access the drugs to which they have become addicted. This behavior arises out of a condition the appropriate response to which is one of medical care and harm reduction, not years of incarceration. The idea that putting human beings in cages is an appropriate policy response to a public health crisis is fatally flawed with moral turpitude. It's also simply bad public policy. I am writing as a private Oregonian citizen, but am informed on this issue by years of practice in housing and homeless services policy. The highly vulnerable people I work hard every day to serve are among the people that would be directly targeted by this legislation. The informal drug economy and the dangers to users associated with it being forced underground are a PRODUCT of the war on drugs. More fuel to that fire will just burn more people, not reduce future harms. I urge you not to move this bill forward.

Sincerely,
Vahid Brown
Portland, Oregon