

I support this implementation of Measure 110, passed this past November. While it is almost universally believed that there are harms resulting to individuals, their families, and to the community from drug addiction, there are two conflicting schools of thought about what to do. The first uses the law and the deterrent effect of law enforcement to deter use, accompanied by an intensive public information campaign on the criminality and danger of use to prevent people from starting to use ("use reduction"). The second accepts that some use is inevitable and that not all use is equally harmful, and seeks to reduce the harms associated with drug use by programs that provide treatment for addiction, counseling, and prevention campaigns based upon a focus on the benefits of a drug-free or limited-drug-use lifestyle ("harm reduction").

Historically, the emphasis has been on use reduction, including the criminalization of manufacture, transportation, sale, possession, and use of drugs, where there is little distinction between the nature of the drug being addressed (with the prominent exception of alcohol and tobacco—the two drugs with the most widespread documentable harms—being legal but regulated) and the amount of drug possessed or consumed. An example of a public information use reduction campaign was First Lady Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" effort in the 1980s. Use reduction, personified as a "war on drugs," has been markedly unsuccessful over time, and many observers have noted that such wars inflict casualties not on the drugs but on both users and the friends and families of users. Use reduction regimes caused the prison population in the United States to soar, especially for people of color, while not reducing use, even in the prisons. Studies showed that attempting to seal the borders from drugs were not only impossible to achieve, but even if the majority of the drugs heading to the United States were confiscated, the rise in the street price of the drug would be minimal.

Realization of the failure of use reduction wars on drugs to led to consideration of an alternative approach that recognized that not all drug use is the same. Some drugs create more harms than other drugs, and heavy use of any drug is more harmful than light use. Measure 110 is the next step in a progression that began with the realization that marijuana was not the evil that the classical movie *Reefer Madness* made it out to be. That step is decriminalization. One of the greatest harms of drug use arises from its illegality. When drugs are illegal, then criminals sell drugs, and the establishment of a significant criminal structure for drugs is inevitable. If the connection between the criminal world and the drug user is severed, then the harms of drug use can be reduced. A pioneering event of decriminalization was the decision by the Portuguese government in 2000 to decriminalize use and possession for use of all drugs. Having and using drugs did not result in criminal prosecution, but instead in counseling and recommendations for treatment. The decriminalization regime began in July 2001, and a planned five-year assessment of the consequences showed that not only were the harms of drugs reduced, but actual usage went down, as the percentage of users who were heavy users (the population suffering the consequences of use the most) decreased. The Portuguese example was noted by a number of other countries, and efforts at broad decriminalization are increasingly seen in the world. (Disclosure: I led the team that designed the evaluation of the Portuguese example that established its success.) While Measure 110 did not go as far as the Portuguese policy, the evaluation I designed indicates that a successful implementation of Measure 110 will significantly improve the lives of many Oregonians. SB 755 is such a plan for implementation.