

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation,

My name is Felix Hamerlynck and I am a baker in La Grande. Since I was a teenager, I have lived and traveled all around Eastern Oregon and have seen the effects of the opioid and meth epidemics in almost every town I visit.

I once served jury duty on a trial of a woman accused of drug possession. Her alleged offenses were non-violent, and evidence indicated she was a victim of domestic abuse. A sane response to this would be to offer that woman shelter and medical care, but instead, she faced multiple years in prison. It is the role of a government to ensure the wellbeing of its people, and punitive drug laws have clearly been ineffective in combating widespread drug addiction and the consequences it has on our communities.

With Measure 110, we have the chance to start healing the damage caused both by the drug epidemic and draconic drug laws. Studies and policies around the world have shown that treating addiction as a health issue, rather than punishing its victims, is the best way to reduce drug addiction and overdose rates. With overdose deaths skyrocketing--up 70% for all drugs between spring 2019 and spring 2020--we need the expanded support for addiction treatment and recovery services that Measure 110 offers now more than ever. And we need those services to be fully funded.

The people have already spoken. It is now up to you to stand by them and deliver desperately-needed help to the many thousands of Oregonians struggling with drug addiction, as well as the friends, families, and communities who have been torn apart by drugs.

Thank you,
Felix Hamerlynck