

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 implementation,

My name is William Herz. I am a psychiatrist in Central Oregon. I am asking you to support the full implementation of Senate Bill 755.

From my 1982 my first year out of residency until I retired about two years ago I had the privilege to serve as a consulting psychiatrist for community mental health programs in Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook, Harney and Lake counties. These five counties have a land area larger than the 10 smallest states.

With the exception of the Bend area, all of this region has very limited access to adequate mental health and substance use treatment services. There is not enough space or time here to recount my observations over the past 38 years of the devastating effects criminalization of substance use disorder and lack of access to treatment services in rural communities have had on individuals, families and entire communities in rural and remote Oregon. While much improved with the advent of the Oregon Health Plan, we still have a long way to go.

To better understand the disaster our current inadequate system has helped perpetuate on our rural communities I wish that every member of our state legislature could read the book "Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope" by nationally known husband and wife authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn who live near Yamhill, Oregon. Mr. Kristof grew in the area and writes about how nearly one fourth of the students he grew up with have prematurely died from a combination of the effects of substance use and poverty. My father, who is 99 and also grew up in Yamhill graduating with the high school class of 1938, first alerted me to this book noting how sad it was that our approach to these problems really had not changed in 80 years.

Decriminalization of drug possession and providing good treatment resources for persons trying to overcome substance works far better and is far less costly than our current approach of dumping people into the criminal justice system. The best example of this may be Portugal. Portugal decriminalized all drugs in 2001 and since then has seen dramatic drops in overdoses, HIV infection and drug related crime. They certainly have not solved all of the problems, but their morbidity and mortality rates from substance use and its associated problems appear to be steadily proceeding in a downward direction while ours continue to rise.

There is considerable evidence the approach to dealing with substance use disorders contained in Measure 110 is the most medically sound and cost effective rout we can take.

Thank you,

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