

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

My name is Dave Liedman. I live in Bend and I own a small dog-daycare business. I am writing because it's imperative that we implement this year the addiction treatment and recovery services laid out in Measure 110. Measure 110 explicitly called for these services to be established and their funds to be disbursed by 2021, and Oregon voters decisively approved of this timeline by voting to enact Measure 110 by a 17% margin in 2020. Just as we expect the state and federal officials we elect to take office on time, it is equally important that we implement voter-mandated ballot measures like Measure 110 in a timely fashion. As the saying goes, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

When I saw Measure 110 on the ballot, I felt it was very important to support it. I have known several people with substance abuse issues. While the threat of criminal convictions may make some people want to quit their addictions, it gives them no tools with which to do so.

One person I know whose struggle with addiction exemplifies this problem is Chris, who used to work for me in 2016. Chris had experience working with dogs through an animal rescue organization and was a good fit for the job. He was eager to work any shifts that came up, and took good care of the dogs in his charge and his own dog, alike. He was mature, responsible, and a good employee.

Chris worked for me for many months with no indication that he had a history of any problems with substance abuse. But as he continued in his position and his work suffered, I began to suspect that he was under the influence of alcohol or other substances while at work. He would forget some of his responsibilities on the job, and was frequently tardy for work. One day, he arrived for his shift and was barely conscious, but refused to acknowledge his impairment at first, for fear of losing his job. From the way he spoke, I was sure this had happened to him before.

I walked around the block with Chris, away from the business, and we talked. He broke down and admitted he had a history of PTSD. He told me he used prescription drugs to control it and had recently been taking more of those drugs to combat panic attacks. He explained that he was working to adjust his treatment regimen to address those panic attacks, but it was very difficult for him to take control of his situation on his own. Sometimes, he would take too much. Other times, he didn't enough.

I didn't want to give up on Chris when he was working for me. Occasionally, I helped him with a place to stay, vet care for his dog when she was sick, and worked with him to

design a work schedule that could accommodate his needs. But in the end, it was too difficult for me to run the business while coping with the uncertainties that can come with an employee struggling with addiction. Chris tried hard to stay functional, but kept showing up to work too high to perform his duties, and I could no longer afford to employ him. I felt terrible. I knew I couldn't help him--I tried, but I didn't know how. And despite his best efforts, he couldn't get the care he wanted from his primary care physician.

I didn't hear much from Chris until recently, but just last week, he friended me on Facebook. I learned that he has been living in a shed in an alley and that some of his friends were trying to raise enough funds to get him the housing and recovery services that he needs.

People in Chris's situation need more extensive and consistent support than can be offered by individual or institutional charity. Just like with any chronic medical condition, addiction requires professional treatment. Just as someone with diabetes or heart disease cannot be expected to cope with their conditions on their own, an addict needs attentive, compassionate medical care.

For a long time, the state's solution to addiction was to prosecute addicts. As we now know, though, treating people with addictions as criminals exacerbates other social problems, such as unemployment, homelessness, hunger, and theft. The Measure 110 provisions that decriminalized simple possession of small amounts of drugs are an important first step toward mitigating addiction-related incarceration's social, economic, and legal implications, but on their own, they are not enough to tackle the crisis of addiction. The funds we save by not imprisoning people for simple possession can be much more effectively and humanely used to support treatment programs that can help addicts recover and go on to live productive, fulfilling lives. Oregon voters overwhelmingly recognized this fact, which is why they voted for Measure 110. It is now time that the legislature act in accordance with the voters' wishes.

In closing, I urge you to pass SB 755 and fully support Measure 110's addiction treatment and recovery programs without delay. For far too long, we have been failing people like Chris by treating them as if they're just down on their luck, or as if they're criminals. Even if we cannot help ALL who struggle with addiction, we must act NOW to help as many people as we can from falling through the cracks of a broken system.

Sincerley,  
Dave Liedman  
Bend, OR