

Good afternoon esteemed Senators and Committee Members,

My name is Noah Grunzweig, and I am an Oregon resident and creative entrepreneur who owns and lives in my home in SE Portland.

I would like to start by thanking you all for your service and commitment to inclusive democracy, especially in these tumultuous times. Ultimately, I am writing today to ask you to fully support the funding and implementation of the people's mandate outlined in Measure 110 from November's electoral ballot and that is now in legislative consideration with Senate Bill 755.

Did you know that the criminalization of drug possession that exists today was championed by Nixon - a president that no one looks to for good judgement. And yet his criminal policies were never questioned. Why? Well, because his policies around drug criminalization were endorsed by affluent and influential people who wanted the concentration of wealth, property, and social capital that they had accumulated over centuries of economic growth fueled by the slave labor of people of color and the free or underpaid labors of poor whites and women to stay in their hands. They saw any class of people gaining economic and political power as a threat, and the biggest threat they saw was the rise of economic and political potential within communities of color. After all, economic and social equity means the loss of a disenfranchised cheap labor class the upper classes don't mind taking advantage of.

Now, while modern police have tried to train less racism and classism into the enforcement of these drug laws, the outcome has continued to devastate poor and communities of color, and this is because the legal scaffolding guiding the policing of drug use, addiction, and drug possession has, at its core, sought to criminalize an activity and experience that is not criminal. There is nothing criminal about using a drug. And drug addiction is not a crime. It is a complex mix of externalized trauma coping, biological dependency, and social systems that prevent the stability needed for recovery.

So, we all see this more clearly now, and it's like waking up and realizing we've been abusing our friends. Now what? Well, I think we should invest in the recovery of our friends, and fully, so we can heal our relationships and build a better future together.

We need the bare minimum funding for the programs proposed in SB 755 to be enough to have "well functioning," not adequate or minimally functioning, well functioning programs all across the state. There should be no city or county that has to rely on police systems because of under-funding, no neighborhood that lacks linguistic or locational access for the populations that live in their area. Measure 110 was a mandate from the vast majority of voting Oregonians to engage the citizens of this state with greater investment and protection, not criminalization and punishment. To do anything else than fully fund is like saying "ok, we know we've been poisoning your water for years, and it's a social and health crisis now, but we've stopped, so it's all on you now."

Please make sure that we put a moratorium on arresting the life potential of our people, add funds for combing through our prison system to find, release, and reinvest in the individuals who had their lives stolen for minor drug possession. Please make sure that the treatment support system that is already overburdened and underfunded has the opportunity to thrive as a support system rather than be broken by this mandate.

Please support fully these efforts to move us all towards greater collective and individual health and well being.

If you have any questions about my testimony, feel free to contact me and schedule a time to talk. Thank you again for working to represent the well being and prosperity of all Oregonians over the economic and political profits of the few.

Cheers,
Noah Grunzweig