



# **PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE**

**Submitted to the  
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
March 1, 2021**

**Testimony in Support of SB 755  
Submitted by Andy Ko, Executive Director  
Partnership for Safety & Justice**

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Partnership for Safety & Justice advocates for public safety and criminal justice policies that ensure accountability, equity, and healing for people convicted of crime, crime survivors, and the families and communities of both. For over 20 years, PSJ's work has promoted public safety policies that keep families together, reduce racial disparities, and invest in communities across Oregon.

We support Senate Bill 755 and the Committee's intention to make form and style changes that respect the mandate of Oregon voters in passing Ballot Measure 110 to end the criminalization of addiction and to significantly increase essential services for people who use drugs.

The criminalization of people who use drugs has been a destructive, too often racist, and profoundly misguided response to the impacts of drug use on individuals, families, and our broader communities. With the passage of Measure 110, the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act, Oregon voters soundly rejected the decades-long harm caused by punishment-based responses to drug use and recast Oregon drug policy to address addiction as a health issue.

Measure 110 is the law in Oregon. The challenge now is to honor the will of Oregon's voters and to prevent it from being quietly undermined by interests and habitual thought that are deeply rooted in the fear-based stigmatization of people suffering from addiction, which in terms of an effective policy response is little different from mental illness, diabetes, and other serious chronic health conditions.

Whether with approval or blame, President Richard Nixon is generally viewed as initiating the drug policies of the past half century. But it is often forgotten that his administration prioritized funding for treatment and other services above law enforcement responses. It was not until a decade later, in the 1980s, that law enforcement programs began to outcompete otherwise successful health-based programs for public resources intended to address drug use. The result was a stark line drawn along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, with drug users from more privileged backgrounds benefiting from access to supportive services and those from less powerful communities facing criminalization.

The decisive approval of Ballot Measure 110 clearly signaled that a sizable majority of Oregon voters now understand drug use as a health issue that should be addressed through treatment, supportive services, and harm reduction programs. That is cause for hope that we can finally turn the corner and stop falsely equating addiction with criminality. But old habits – particularly bad ones that offer false comfort – are hard to break.

We urge you to reject any proposed amendments that would violate the intent of Measure 110 or carve out exceptions to the health-centered approach established by Oregon voters. For example, one suggested exception would set an arbitrary maximum number of citations that an individual could receive before some form of coercive sanction would be imposed – ignoring that low level drug possession is no longer a crime in Oregon, as well as the chronic nature of addiction. Another proposal would create an exception for youth cited for drug possession by subjecting them to the coercive power of the justice system. This similarly suggests that a segment of Oregonians should continue to be criminalized and ignores that Measure 110 provides for a range of health-based responses to drug use that would include those most effective in protecting the health and future of young Oregonians.

Partnership for Safety and Justice urges the Committee and the Oregon Legislature to preserve the integrity of Measure 110 by fully funding its voter approved services, which will establish an effective health based response to drug use, and by resisting a half-century of misguided public policy that has criminalized some of our state's most vulnerable people.

Measure 110 is an opportunity to finally take on the real work of effectively addressing the actual harms associated with drug use. For the good of all Oregonians and as an example for our nation, that opportunity should be embraced and rapidly expanded.

We strongly urge your support for the preservation and strengthening of the fundamental purpose of Measure 110, as passed, in your deliberations regarding SB 755.