

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Walters and Reschke, and members of the House Revenue Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Ian Johnson. I am a legal worker and homeowner in East Portland. Originally, I supported Measure 110 just because it seemed like a good idea--a sensible, compassionate step towards providing medical treatment to those in need while keeping people who pose no danger to others out of our penitentiaries. My understanding of this issue grew far deeper, though, one night in December 2020. What I saw that night showed me that implementing Measure 110 is not just a good idea, but a matter of life and death.

While exchanging holiday gifts with a friend at his apartment, I heard a woman outside scream, "He's not breathing! What's the address here?"

My friend and I went to investigate and found his neighbor lying on his kitchen floor with cyanotic lips, no pulse, and his young son standing over him, asking what was wrong. Having grown up in a drug-ravaged town in Southern California, I knew what was happening. I've seen people O.D. before.

My EMT certification had expired nearly ten years ago before that night, but no one else was in any position to help.

I put the boy to work making me a rescue mask from a ziplock bag--more for the sake of distracting him from what I was about to do than for any hope it would protect me from a coronavirus risk--and I started compressions. I don't know how many minutes I spent there performing CPR, but his heartbeat and breathing returned before the fire department arrived and revived him with Narcan.

My friend's neighbor is alive and well today. But I will never forget the look on his son's face as he watched his father's life slipping away on the kitchen floor, or the feeling of his ribs breaking under my hands while I prayed that my half-remembered training from 2009 would be good enough.

I'm glad I was able to help that night. But I know that both of us caught a lucky break. If our state fails to adequately fund its recovery programs, saving a poor, working father may only provide a temporary reprieve. Addiction is a chronic illness and a public health crisis. Addressing it demands a consistent, coordinated effort. People recover every day, but few can do it alone. So when someone says by word or action, "I need help," we should believe them and give them the support they need without delay. Every moment of delay is one in which we have failed them.

The Measure 110 funds that the State allocated in 2021 are playing a critical role in expanding addiction treatment and recovery care across Oregon. Before the measure was implemented, Oregon ranked dead last in the nation for access to addiction treatment. Thanks to Measure 110 funding, our state's recovery care providers have been making real progress in expanding care, but much more remains to be done.

By defunding recovery, HB 2089 would undo much of this progress. Stripping tens of millions of dollars away from addiction treatment programs just as those programs are starting to roll out their expanded care efforts would throw a devastating stumbling block in the way of fighting addiction.

Today, every time I step over a needle on the street, I wonder how many of my neighbors won't catch a lucky break--how many little boys or girls will watch their parents die because we valued local coffers and state police funds more than their parents? How could Oregon explain to these children that the state would let their parents die for lack of treatment? That the State dangled a ladder to recovery, changed its mind, and pulled it away just as people started to climb it?

I implore you to safeguard Measures 110's addiction treatment funds and vote NO on HB 2089.

Sincerely,
Ian Johnson
Portland, OR