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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Measure: HB3431

Black people in the past 20 year until current years are still being arrested up to 4 times more often than white people in Oregon for cannabis related issues even though the use and possession of cannabis is pretty equal. This problem has effected the wealth of these black families in a huge way making the income gap increasingly larger. Oregon needs to make big changes to help fight this problem. The wealth gap is only getting bigger and bigger Oregon needs to make changes now to stop it from getting worse. The communities at the lower end of the wealth gap are the same communities experiencing the highest substance abuse deaths. My husband and I have seen this first hand in recent years. We have experienced actual hordes of people huddled in alleys doing drugs together of all ages and are children have had kids in their high school who they have known since kindergarten recently die of overdoses. This problem is only getting worse in a rapidly increasing manor and needs to be addressed.

The next step is for \$150 million per year collected in cannabis taxes to be an ongoing funding toward economic stability programs and substance abuse treatment centers for the most vulnerable Oregonians. The Economic Equity Investment Program (EEIP), created in 2022, directed Business Oregon to provide one-time funding to community-based organizations with solutions that build generational wealth for communities experiencing many different income based risk factors. HB 3431 asks the legislature to make ongoing, economic justice investments with cannabis taxes so that we can achieve positive change in the intersecting issues of poverty and behavioral health inequalities.

The lowest homeownership rates belong to the Black, Native Am., and Latin Am. communities, and their homes hold less value than other racial and ethnic groups. Their wealth is also not growing at pace with other racial and ethnic groups. And according to census data shows median wealth could hit zero by 2053 for the Black and Latin Am. families.

We really need to treat substance abuse first it is the key to closing these gaps. The way to do that is to make spaces available and capable of helping those in our community of higher risk to deal with their substance abuse issues in a safe and successful environment. If we can not get these communities healthy then the gap will only get bigger and bigger. People need economic stability, their baseline needs met and resources to build a better future.

Substance abuse death rates are increasing at alarming rates for Black Americans

and it needs to be stopped now. The 2020 overdose mortality rate among Black people was higher than among White people for the first time since 1999. Latino communities are right behind the Black communities have experienced the second highest increase in overdose death rates since 2012. And the American Indian or Alaska Native individuals experienced the highest rate of overdose deaths in 2020 (41.4 per 100,000), which was 30.8% higher than that for White individuals.

Closing this wealth gap is a root cause, We need proactive solution to pressing concerns facing Oregon!