

Guest View: Measure 110 full of false promises

Patricia Perlow and Chris Wig

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Measure 110 on the November ballot is a risky gamble that wagers the lives of Oregonians experiencing addiction by decriminalizing lethal, addictive drugs for children, teens and adults. Oregon is in the middle of an opioid and methamphetamine addiction crisis, and Measure 110 would take away \$56 million from addiction treatment and prevention — as well as defunding \$90 million from Oregon schools.

You read that right. If Measure 110 is passed by the voters, teenagers in Oregon could be caught with heroin or methamphetamine in their pocket and the only consequences would be paying a \$100 fine or attending a health assessment, either of which could be easily concealed from their parents.

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Not only would Measure 110 essentially legalize addictive drugs, it would also dismantle the only pathway to addiction recovery for many Oregon youth and adults: court diversion programs.

Right now, juveniles and adults who are charged with possession of drugs in Oregon are offered state-funded treatment. This means trained addiction counselors, culturally specific recovery resources and high-quality in-patient and out-patient treatment. These are lifesaving services that many Oregon families otherwise could not access or afford.

As Lane County's elected district attorney and the director of a community-based addiction treatment program, we believe that people deserve a second chance. And we have seen drug court and other diversion programs motivate thousands of people to make life changes and start their journey toward a lifetime of recovery from addiction. We've seen people enter treatment disconnected from their families, children removed, jobs lost, maybe committing crimes to feed their addiction or to survive. With trauma-informed treatment, we've seen these same people start to heal, build the social, emotion regulation and problem-solving skills necessary to navigate life challenges, earn their GED or college degree and reconnect with their loved ones.

Let's not let Measure 110 take that away.

It gets worse. Despite false promises, Measure 110 would not create a single new treatment bed.

All the measure requires is the creation of 16 centers that provide screenings and referrals, not high-quality, evidence-based addiction treatment. Oregon doesn't have a shortage of health assessment and referral centers. Oregon does have a shortage of residential treatment beds.

Referrals are not treatment. Screenings are not access.

If Measure 110 were truly about improving access to treatment, it would have set clear targets for real, quality treatment, like more sobering centers and detox facilities, more residential treatment beds, more out-patient care and more certified drug and alcohol counselors for our neighbors, parents, youth and adults.

Finally, Measure 110 will cost lives. Over the next three years, it takes away \$45 million from mental health and addiction services currently provided by Oregon counties and cities. It takes away \$11 million from the alcohol and drug abuse prevention and intervention that can help stop people — especially youth — from becoming addicted in the first place.

Without prevention, people can become addicted to drugs or alcohol. Without intervention, people don't go into treatment. Without treatment, people can lose their jobs, hurt their families, commit crimes or even die from overdose.

Closing pathways to treatment and taking away funding during an addiction epidemic will lead to a spike in overdoses and alcohol-related deaths. Already, one to three Oregonians die from drug overdose and five Oregonians die from alcohol-related causes every day. And the isolation that has resulted from the COVID-19 health emergency has caused the number of Oregonians abusing substances to soar.

Measure 110 is opposed by 26 out of 36 district attorneys in the state, because we DAs believe that our criminal justice system enforcement plays an important role in getting people the help they need.

Measure 110 is also opposed by the Oregon Council for Behavioral Health, because we treatment providers believe it does not address fundamental problems in Oregon's addiction treatment and recovery system.

And Measure 110 is opposed by Oregon Recovers — the statewide coalition of Oregonians who are living in recovery — because it will lead to additional unnecessary deaths and reduce enrollment in treatment centers throughout the state.

Join us in voting no on Measure 110.

Patricia Perlow is Lane County's elected District Attorney. Chris Wig is the Director of the Focus Treatment Court Program at Emergence Addiction and Behavioral Therapies. The opinions in this piece are their own and do not reflect those of any organization. Visit VoteNoOn110.com to learn more.