The Oregon District Attorneys Association strongly opposes IP 44 as a dangerous approach to the addiction crisis in our State. This measure recklessly decriminalizes possession of the most dangerous types of drugs including methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and ecstasy.

This measure is not the best way to address this crisis and improve Oregon’s response to addiction. We are already #1 in pain reliever misuse, #2 in methamphetamine use, #3 in prevalence for any mental illness and #4 in cocaine use….and yet Oregon is 48th in the country in providing access to treatment for those who need it.

Funding a robust and effective treatment infrastructure is the essential first step toward helping those struggling with addiction.  Existing treatment resources are not nearly sufficient to meet the already staggering need.  Not only would decriminalization lead to an increase in supply and accessibility risking an increase in overdoses while potentially expanding the universe (and possible greater youth access), it removes law enforcement as an important partner in combating what is both a public safety and a public health problem.  Law enforcement intervention is often necessary to protect children and families, bridge individuals to critical live-saving treatment services and keep our neighborhoods safe from the attendant crime that frequently accompanies addiction. Sadly, many people only confront their substance use disorder because of a contact with law enforcement which often ends is diversion and treatment. Today only 26 of our 36 counties have drug treatment courts. We can, and must, do better. This measure will tie the hands of law enforcement and prosecutors everywhere and lead to disastrous results for our communities.

The Oregon District Attorneys Association is committed to working with our public health partners and treatment providers to increase the resources necessary to respond to this imminent need in a safe and responsible way. This measure is not that path.