

**Senate Bill 509 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization)
- FAVORABLE WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENT**

My name is Blake Mihm, and I am strongly in favor of SB 509 with amendments. I work in HIV testing and prevention, and the decriminalization of drug paraphernalia will have a positive impact on efforts to stop the HIV epidemic.

The state of Maryland has three priority jurisdictions in the nationwide Ending the HIV Epidemic Program: Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Prince George's County. These jurisdictions are considered priority because they have a concentrated number of new HIV infections. Seven studies funded by the US Government conclude that access to sterile drug use supplies decreases HIV transmission, and does not increase drug use.

Decriminalizing paraphernalia will increase access to sterile syringes and smoking supplies, which will in turn decrease the transmission of HIV and other communicable diseases. Hepatitis C is a resilient virus that is passed easily even in tiny amounts of blood. Sharing straws for snorting drugs, pipes for smoking drugs, and cookers for mixing drugs can all pass hepatitis C. Access to drug paraphernalia is important both on an individual level, because people who use drugs deserve to be healthy, and at a community level, because a decrease in communicable diseases benefits everyone living in a community.