

Trans Maryland
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**TRANS
MARYLAND**



Senate/House Bill # **SB 509** Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 16, 2022
Position: **Support**

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest volume peer to peer program, offering guidance and financial assistance to transgender Marylanders seeking social, legal, and medical access to transition.

Good day Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and the esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lee Blinder, and I am the executive director of Trans Healthcare MD. I am writing to testify in support of SB 509 Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization. Transgender persons can be at greater risk of scrutiny, whether or not there is any indication of illicit drug use, when possessing syringes and needles used for our medically necessary and life saving gender affirming hormone replacement therapy (GAHT). GAHT is often taken intramuscularly or subcutaneously via syringe by transgender persons, and we do not deserve to face criminal charges for simply having our medical supplies with us. Overpolicing disproportionately impacts our community members living at the intersection of anti-Blackness, sexism, and anti-transgender bias, and we ask that the house committee decriminalize this antiquated process. Access to sterile syringes is a public health necessity, and when our community members cannot feel safe to possess medically necessary supplies, inappropriate reusing of supplies becomes more likely.

We know that access to sterile single use syringes is key to halting transmission of blood borne pathogens, and also reduces pain upon injection of medically necessary and life saving medications like GAHT. Our most well resourced community members order year long supplies of syringes in bulk to be shipped directly to their home, but that option isn't available for most of our community members who lack the needed funds to do so. Additionally, should persons be able to order their supplies, they also feel concerned about bringing them on a trip or to travel, due to this outdated criminalization process. Transporting medical supplies must be decriminalized so our community members can feel safe in possessing the supplies they need. We find that many pharmacies across Maryland are, in their words, "low syringe pharmacies" and that can mean that it can be difficult or impossible to even purchase the needed supplies. Adding fear of charges for possession on top of low access, means that our community are afraid to access and possess their needed medical supplies.

This is an urgent matter of public health, public wellness, and equity, and we strongly urge a favorable report on this Bill SB 509.

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org