

Nicholas DeTello

SB0509 Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization

Favorable

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I am a student, Eagle Scout, family man, as well as a Civil Rights Enthusiast. I have voted independently, I am currently registered as a Libertarian, and I have a diverse set of views (some left, some right). These include but are not limited to: equality, limiting abuse of police power, protection of minority groups (such as my direct LGBT family) and decriminalization of victimless crimes (drug possession, gun possession, exercising civil rights, etc.). I am also related to victims of our cyclic incarceration system and have friends/family who have suffered under the current prohibition of Drug Paraphernalia; for these reasons I urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 0509.

Too often I find myself testifying *against* bills in Annapolis; this is usually due to proposed bills being used as tools to enhance the overreach of already far too-powerful Law Enforcement Agencies. I would testify the same way even if it was overreach in Austin, Texas or Phoenix, Arizona. Many of the answers to the problems in this country are not solved by giving police **more** ways to arrest and jail citizens. Often the opposite is true; officer badge cams, repealing qualified immunity, decriminalization of victimless crimes, and favoring rehabilitation over incarceration are all positives in my book. That's exactly why this bill is so important; I strongly support empowering citizens and taking harsh/unnecessary laws off the books.

Just this last year there were many calls to reform police authority; now is the perfect opportunity to act on the will of the people, and for many of you to fulfill your campaign promises. Per the below link there are over 18,000 imprisoned in Maryland, many for victimless crimes made-up by overly zealous crime bills (i.e. drug possession, gun possession, etc.):

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/prison-population-by-state>

Why is it we're jailing users of commonly possessed substances, inanimate objects incapable of doing harm on their own? By continuing to bow to Federal regulations, we are giving full reign to 3 letter agencies such as the DEA, ICE, and ATF to abuse our state-level LEOs, leading to unfair and unjust enforcement on all levels of government. By taking a stand against this prohibition, this victimless crime, Maryland could spearhead efforts to cut down on prison populations, abuse of police power, and government overreach.

One of the most serious issues with criminalizing victimless crimes, is that those near or below the poverty level, or the less privileged, are the most likely to be caught and prosecuted. Someone living in Baltimore City, perhaps in an over-policed area, is far more likely to be jailed for drugs, guns, or other object-based crime-laws, over someone living in rural Carroll County, or western Maryland. I believe passing this bill would level the playing field, improving equality in this state.

I find it reprehensible that possession of Drug Paraphernalia leads to larger sentences than simply possessing a Schedule 1 drug, and often the punishment is tied directly to one's constitutional rights. Any other controlled equipment or substance is deemed "OK" if it is prescribed by a doctor. Often the punishment doesn't fit the crime proposed by Drug Paraphernalia laws. In the 1920's we had a prohibition on alcohol, and history proved this to be folly. Now that prohibition is repealed, you don't see alcohol dealers peddling on street corners; you don't see gangs competing in a black market over Moonshine. Clearly de-regulating, decriminalizing, and rehabilitating your constituents is ideal.

To conclude, there are many reasons to vote **favorably** on **this** bill (and **unfavorably** on **others**). This bill would end an unfair prohibition on a commonly used substance, it would empower citizens *instead* of strengthening an already too-powerful police-state, and it would bring equality to your constituents.

For these reasons I urge you to vote favorably on Senate Bill 0509.

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