

Testimony in Support of SB 509
Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 16th, 2022

Calvin Schuster
District 46

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Thank you for the chance to testify in support of Senate Bill 509 with an amendment to ensure that the current bill matches the version which the Maryland General Assembly passed last year. My name is Calvin Schuster and I am a medical student at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. I believe that supporting SB 509 addresses an important public health issue present in Maryland: ensuring legal access to sterile supplies that may be used to consume drugs reduces the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other blood-borne diseases. Additionally, access to supplies does not increase improperly discarded needles,¹ rates of drug use,² or other criminalized activity.³

Along with being a medical student, I am also a volunteer with Trans Maryland, a local nonprofit that works to improve the lives of transgender citizens of Maryland. Transgender people often use syringes as part of their medical transition in order to self-administer doses of their prescribed hormone replacement therapy. When people do not feel safe acquiring and possessing their medically necessary sterile supplies because they are unsure about legality, they are more likely to resort to the dangerous reuse or sharing of needles and syringes. This puts members of the transgender community at increased risk of health issues including the spread of blood-borne diseases. If SB 509 passes, it will lead to a safer and healthier Maryland for all people who use needles and syringes as part of their medical care.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support SB 509. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Calvin Schuster

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¹ New York Academy of Medicine. New York State Expanded Syringe Access Demonstration Program Evaluation. January 15, 2003

² National Institutes of Health Consensus Panel, Interventions to Prevent HIV Risk Behaviors (Kensington, MD: National Institutes of Health Consensus Program Information Center, February 1997).

³ P. Lurie, A.L. Reingold, B. Bowser (eds). The Public Health Impact of Needle Exchange Programs in the United States and Abroad: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations (1993)