

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2003 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 277  
Judiciary

(Delegate Petzold)

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**Crimes - Controlled Dangerous Substances - Penalties for 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)**

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This emergency bill provides that current law penalties applicable to the manufacture, distribution, dispensation, or possession of Schedule I or II hallucinogenic substances apply to 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), regardless of amount of that substance involved.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill's changes to the specified felony penalty provisions relating to MDMA should not affect governmental operations or finances relating to sentencing or incarcerations.

**Local Effect:** None – see above.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Chapter 449 of 2001 added the manufacture, distribution, dispensation, or possession of 750 grams or more of MDMA to the list of offenses for which violators are subject to maximum felony penalties of a fine of \$20,000 and/or imprisonment for 20 years (certain mandatory minimum sentences for subsequent offenders also apply). Prior to this enactment, offenses involving any amount of MDMA subjected a person to a maximum penalty of five years/\$15,000.

A person convicted of the manufacture, distribution, or possession of the following controlled dangerous substances are also subject to maximum penalties of a fine of \$20,000 and/or imprisonment for 20 years: phencyclidine, 1-(1-phenylcyclohexyl) piperidine, 1-phenylcyclohexylamine, or 1-piperidinocyclohexanecarbonitrile, classified in Schedule II, or n-ethyl-1-phenylcyclohexylamine, 1-(1-phenylcyclohexyl)-pyrrolidine, 1-(1-(2-thienyl)-cyclohexyl)-piperidine, or lysergic acid diethylamide, classified in Schedule I.

**Background:** MDMA is a Schedule I controlled dangerous substance. Controlled dangerous substances are placed in one of five categories, known as schedules. Schedule I drugs have: (1) a high potential for abuse; (2) no accepted medical use in the United States; and (3) a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision. MDMA is categorized as a hallucinogenic substance.

MDMA, often called “Ecstasy,” “ADAM,” or “X-TC,” on the street, is a synthetic, mind-altering drug with hallucinogenic and amphetamine-like properties.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, MDMA is a “club drug” and works as a stimulant similar to methamphetamine. It is taken orally in tablet form, and causes dehydration as well as increases in heart rate and blood pressure. Ingestion may lead to an elevation of body temperature that causes kidney and cardiovascular failure. When combined with alcohol, MDMA use has been reported as having had fatal results. It is also believed that chronic abuse may produce long-lasting neurotoxic effects on the brain.

This bill stems from a concern that Chapter 449 of 2001 may have inadvertently eliminated the felony penalties for violations involving less than 750 grams of MDMA. If this were the case, misdemeanor penalties of a maximum four years/\$25,000 would apply to these offenses.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** A similar bill, HB 41 of 2002, was withdrawn.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (Division of Correction), Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 12, 2003  
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