

David Avruch, LCSW-C
2009 Druid Park Drive
Baltimore, MD 21211
davruch@gmail.com

Molly Amster
Baltimore Director, JUFJ
2221 Maryland Ave., 2nd Floor
molly@jufj.org



TESTIMONY SUPPORTING HB193

Criminal Procedure- Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis Quantity

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: David Avruch, LCSW-C on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is David Avruch. I am a resident of Baltimore City's 40th legislative district, am an active member of Jews United for Justice, and I am also a licensed mental health clinician. Jews United for Justice organizes more than 4,000 Jews around the state in support of local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

I submit this testimony in favor of HB193, sponsored by Delegate Cardin, based on my years of experience providing mental health therapy to low-income and homeless residents of Maryland. Many of my clients were exposed to serious physical, psychological and/or sexual trauma over the course of their incarceration in state or federal prison on charges stemming from drug-related offenses. The effects of these traumas haunt survivors for years, gravely damaging their prospects for successful community reintegration upon the completion of their sentences.

The specific point I wish Delegates to consider, in determining the effective merits of this bill, is that its passage would reduce the aggregate exposure of Marylanders to the toxic effects of the severe traumas that are part and parcel of the experience of incarceration. Reams of data have proven conclusively that the more trauma one experiences, the more difficult it is to function in key life domains including holding a job, parenting, and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Right now, you have before you an opportunity to rescue some of your own constituents from the effects of discriminatory drug policy, and to take a small but meaningful step in the direction of evidence-based, humane public policy.

As someone who has heard more stories of incarceration-related trauma than I can count, **it is my fervent desire that you vote in favor of this bill, as well as any other that offers Marylanders a more sensible approach to criminal justice than the failed and expensive War on Drugs.**