



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chairman and
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Chief David Morris, Co-Chair, MCPA, Joint Legislative Committee
Sheriff Darren Popkin, Co-Chair, MSA, Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 18, 2020

RE: **HB 720 Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration –
Decriminalization**

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) OPPOSE HB 720. This bill would decriminalize the use or possession of drug paraphernalia for all other drugs, other than marijuana. These drugs would include dangerous street level (user amount) doses of heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD and others.

MCPA and MSA are very concerned this bill creates potential for an escalation in the continually rising opioid overdose rates by decriminalizing the devices to ingest the substance, that is often a trigger of usage and directly leads to the approximately 80K overdose deaths reported annually in the United States. In addition, if paraphernalia is decriminalized, there would be little to no opportunity to enter treatment through a criminal justice diversion program. These programs include the opportunity, for those who qualify, to avoid criminal prosecution by entering treatment programs, that work in conjunction with the court system, to help users break the cycle of addiction. The danger to public safety that is posed by dangerous street level drugs, as well as the tools to ingest these drugs, requires a comprehensive Criminal Justice approach, that does not include decriminalization.

For these reasons MCPA and MSA OPPOSE HB720 and urge an UNFAVORABLE Report.