

February 11, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Senate Bill 420 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization)
- FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee members,

As a resident of Baltimore City, I support Senate Bill 420 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization).

This bill will amend existing criminal law to remove items that could be used to consume drugs from what is considered drug paraphernalia, effectively decriminalizing possession of those items. Legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2016 has allowed for the expansion of syringe services programs (SSPs) statewide in order to distribute harm reduction supplies to prevent transmission of infectious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

Current syringe services program benefit my community, but decriminalization of drug paraphernalia would do even more to encourage drug users in my area to use as safely as possible and would help curb the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C.

For these health benefits to materialize in Maryland, people need to trust that they can access supplies without law enforcement interference. When supplies are broadly considered illegal, even some registered SSP participants experience harassment and citation from law enforcement who do not understand the confusing patchwork of paraphernalia exceptions.

Equipping people to use drugs more safely reduces the oppression people targeted by the drug war face everyday. When our laws are unclear, law enforcement use their discretion in a way that further marginalizes people who are most at risk of infectious disease and overdose. We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's paraphernalia laws and clarify that possession of harm reduction supplies to prevent infectious disease is not a crime. **We ask that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB420 a favorable report.**

Thanks for your consideration,

Anne Sawyer

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