



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Testimony on Maryland House Bill 420 Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization

TO: Sen. Smith, Chair, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Katy Edwards, Progressive Maryland Drug Policy Taskforce Leader,
Anne Arundel County (D30)
DATE: February 9, 2021
POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB 420. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

My name is Katy Edwards and I currently work as program manager who oversees a police diversion grant here in the city of Annapolis. I have nine years of experience in behavioral health and throughout this time I have seen how the War on Drugs is a direct attack on impoverished communities throughout this country.

This bill would allow for greater access to Harm Reduction resources throughout the state. An example as to how this would assist those seeking Harm Reduction services deals with the transportation and exchange of new and used syringes. If a person is on their way to utilize a syringe exchange in Anne Arundel county, they could be pulled over and charged with paraphernalia even though their ultimate aim is to utilize services which directly counteract the spread of disease.

I know my representatives in the state of Maryland understand the need of disease prevention in our community as well as the necessary increased access to lifesaving services such as syringe exchange and Narcan. This year, our national overdose rate doubled. The CDC [stated](#), "Over 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020." We are losing our community to this War on Drugs.

Please stand up against policies which morally condemn our community members who are currently experiencing a public health crisis. You can do this by supporting Senate Bill 420. This policy would be one step closer to helping those that are in need of evidence-based assistance without subjective condemnation. We urge a favorable report.