



Testimony in Support of HB 372:  
Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization  
On Behalf of Housing Our Neighbors  
Judiciary Committee  
January 19, 2021

Housing Our Neighbors (HON) is a grassroots advocacy organization that supports affordable, safe housing for all who need it and the humane treatment of people experiencing homelessness.

Scores of people who stable housing in our State are searched routinely when accessing shelter and then needlessly incarcerated and fined when they are in possession of drug paraphernalia. Too often, individuals that enter the criminal justice system due to paraphernalia charges experience additional trauma and difficulty.

Collateral consequences include the loss of jobs or beds in emergency shelters if individuals are detained overnight, and then need to start all over again when they are released. Too often, their State identification, which is costly and complex to replace, is lost during this process. Additionally, many people arrested on paraphernalia charges are unable to pay the fines imposed, which complicates their criminal records, making it more difficult for them to obtain employment.

HB 372 is not perfect; it includes counterproductive fines for the possession of some paraphernalia. Nevertheless, we support the Bill's elimination of fines for the use, possession, delivery, or sale of paraphernalia.

We strongly believe that avoiding arrests for paraphernalia will reduce harm to the community and to individuals, assisting individuals experiencing homelessness in securing housing, employment, and essential services. HB 372 is a step in the right direction.