

SB784 - Criminal Law - Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis Quantity

Senate Finance

March 4, 2022

FAVORABLE

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee;

As Chair of The National Trauma Education and Policy Board, it's my privilege to discuss the importance of the above bill. The war on drugs and caused immense unnecessary tax payer dollar expenditure on incarcerating people who have been traumatized and re-traumatized by the system as well as those looking for emotional and physical pain relief as a result of other types of traumas in life. For many without health insurance, illicit drugs become the easiest and most effective way to treat physical and emotional pain. This is where psycho-education of drugs and alcohol is needed as well as drug and alcohol treatment for those needing further assistance which will have dramatically higher success than simply arresting someone and releasing him/her to the same life style.

As someone who has personally worked deep in drug and alcohol counseling, jail/prison diversion, and having managed several programs (Trenton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC), I've witnessed countless times where an individual is trying to get help for addiction and seeking effective services to turn one's life around, only to be arrested and pulled into jail, preventing treatment from occurring. We have all learned by now that there is almost nothing "correctional" in the correctional system. The correctional system causes people to revert back to a child like state and reverses the help the person may have been receiving from effective service provision in the community. Effective drug and alcohol counseling along with psychoeducation can lead to incredible differences in the productivity of people's lives. Therefore, less tax payer dollar spent on criminal justice because people make far less bad decisions.

This bill is incredibly important and should be passed. I also would like to point out that drug treatment programs like what is provided by Empowerment Behavioral Therapeutic Services is an incredibly effective follow-up to ensure people get the treatment needed to be successful in their current and future endeavors in life. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Best Regards,

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