

Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill SB0784

Bill Name: De Minimis Quantity

TO: Senator William C. Smith, Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Betsy F. Amey, Towson, Baltimore County, District 42A

DATE: March 8, 2022

POSITION: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with nine 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. Also, 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.

I'm a member of Progressive Maryland's Drug Policy Task Force. We envision a society where there is equal opportunity for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs. We believe that harm reduction is a part of a broader movement for racial and social justice. I am also a retired Clinical Social Worker who worked for many years at The Resource Group in Towson, providing care to many with mental illness and substance use disorders.

This bill is needed because detaining and incarcerating people, especially children and adolescents, for having small amounts of drugs in their possession needlessly traumatizes them and creates havoc in their families. If some of these people have addiction problems, they are unlikely to receive appropriate treatment in jail, making their situation worse.

Police need to focus their efforts on more serious dangers to the community rather than arresting "easy targets" to improve their statistics. The events of the past 50 years have shown that arresting and prosecuting people for low level crimes has NOT improved public safety, and these "War on Drugs" strategies should be abandoned.

Building trust among police and community members through community policing allows both to collaborate in encouraging people to get into treatment or other prosocial activities. This would improve public safety in the longer term.

We urge a favorable report on this legislation.

Betsy Amey