

March 6, 2023

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

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 762
(Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Meredith Zoltick and I am a nurse practitioner in Baltimore City and I strongly support Senate Bill 762 “Drug Paraphernalia for Administration- Decriminalization,” which will decriminalize possession of items used to consume drugs. This is an important extension of the legislation passed in 2016 to expand syringe service programs in Maryland.

As a nurse practitioner who specializes in HIV and addiction medicine, I encourage my patients to utilize syringe service programs. There is an incredible amount of data showing the benefits of syringe service programs in a variety of settings (rural, urban, and suburban.) Syringe service programs reduce the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis, and other blood-borne pathogens as well as decrease the risk of skin and soft tissue infections. Furthermore, individuals who engage with syringe exchange programs are even more likely to reduce their drug use and go to drug treatment. Far too often, I have patients tell me they are scared to go to syringe service programs for fear that they will be charged with a crime for carrying equipment they get from such programs. While there are protections for individuals enrolled in such programs, there are a lot of misconceptions that a bill to decriminalize all drug paraphernalia could mitigate.

The distribution of tools to use drugs is an essential public health measure. The criminalization of these public health tools reduces their efficacy. **For these reasons, I ask that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB762 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position, please contact Meredith Zoltick, CRNP at mzoltick@ihv.umaryland.edu.

Thank you,

Meredith Zoltick, MSN/MPH, CRNP