

SB0762 Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization
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My Name is Isabel Klompus and I am licensed social worker in Baltimore City. I am writing in support of SB0762 Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization. I work in a community based organization in Southwest Baltimore and many of our clients are people who use drugs. Though it is clear that the opioid epidemic is an issue of concern, the solution is not to make the lives of people who use drugs more difficult. We know that many of our clients who use drugs are also experiencing homelessness, poverty, food insecurity and many other health problems, among the many barriers they face. The current law criminalizing paraphernalia does nothing to reduce the use of drugs or the difficulties that folks who have a substance use disorder face. In fact, the law makes it more difficult for people to access clean, hygienic tools that they need to use drugs safely.

Without access to these tools, people will continue to use drugs. Making their use less safe by reducing access to paraphernalia will do nothing to end drug use. However, without access to clean tools, people are more likely to reuse tools like syringes, or share with others. These practices raise the risk of acquiring or transmitting blood borne infection such as HIV and hepatitis C. We must make access to paraphernalia easier, not limit it or criminalize it. When we criminalize the use of paraphernalia, it only further isolates people who use drugs, as they fear prosecution for trying to attain clean tools. This may lead them to use alone, or hide their use. The rise in overdose deaths has only shown the light on how much work needs to be done to protect people who use drugs in order to save lives. No one should be penalized for trying to be safer and reduce harm to themselves and their community.