



**MARIAN HOUSE**

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB762**  
**Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization**

March 6, 2023

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.  
2 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Testimony of Marian House in Support of SB762**

**Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher,  
and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive support services to assist women with experiences of trauma, including poverty, substance abuse, and incarceration. **I write to urge you to support Senate Bill 762 – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization.**

Over forty years ago, Marian House was opened to provide reentry supports for women leaving incarceration as Sisters and laywomen recognized that lack of support contributed to recidivism rates. Today, we have also expanded to serve women with histories of trauma including homelessness, incarceration, neglect, substance abuse and mental health needs. Since our opening, we have assisted women who have been victims of crime in reinventing and rebuilding themselves through services such as: counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training and providing both long and short-term housing. All the women we have served have overcome obstacles on their journeys to become contributing members of society in the Baltimore area.

These laws are meant to discourage illicit drug use. Instead, they produce avoidable disease and death. Drug prohibition puts peaceful, voluntary drug users at risk of losing their liberty and often their lives. Paraphernalia laws similarly increase the risk that users will lose their lives. Some states have amended their laws to permit harm-reduction programs and tools. For example, many states allow syringe services programs (also called SSPs or “needle exchange programs”) to operate within narrowly defined parameters. The goal of drug paraphernalia policy should be to save lives by reducing the risks of overdose and disease. This means removing government barriers to obtaining and distributing clean syringes and drug testing equipment. Because Alaska leaves residents free to purchase syringes and other paraphernalia in any quantity, anyone can operate an SSP and implement other harm-reduction measures.

As drug-related deaths and diseases continue to mount despite more than 100 years of drug prohibition, policymakers should consider proposals that shift from a zero-tolerance approach to a focus on harm reduction. **We believe that this bill could save lives, therefore, we urge your SUPPORT of SB762.**

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C  
President and C.E.O.