

Hello, my name is Elizabeth Spradley, I have been a nurse in Baltimore City for the last 10 years. In every setting I have provided care, I have worked with people who use drugs: some out of necessity, some out of desire, and some a little of both. Today, I am here to support HB0173 without amendments. These tools that we are calling drug paraphernalia are not designed, distributed, or obtained to cause harm. They are designed, distributed, and obtained to allow people to use the tools as they need while empowering people to help mitigate the spread of infectious diseases for themselves and their communities. We need to decriminalize these tools without amendments and here is a quick story of how blinded people can be in the presence of these tools.

Recently, I was a hospice nurse. We had a patient who had to stay at our facility until the end of their life because the cancer spread to her eye creating a horribly disfiguring fungal wound on half of her face. The patient's husband stayed with her 24/7 leaving only to get some fresh air or gifts for his wife. Prior to coming to our facility, he was her primary caregiver. After months of caring for this patient and spending many hours with her husband who kindly insisted on helping me with any task to feel useful in the room, I see the husband's name on our security list to be searched upon any arrival to the facility because a nurse found a pipe in the room. The security plan was that the police were to be called if he was searched and they found any paraphernalia on him. The medical team never talked to the husband about the pipe yet they decided to make assumptions that this pipe was evidence of some criminal activity and he should be torn away from his dying wife's bedside.

He was not a criminal, he was a loving husband. Please consider the people carrying these tools are humans trying to live their lives as best they can. And, please support HB0173 without amendments.