

# MedChi

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*The Maryland State Medical Society*  
1211 Cathedral Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516  
410.539.0872  
Fax: 410.547.0915  
1.800.492.1056  
www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair  
Members, House Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable David Moon

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Andrew G. Vetter  
Christine K. Krone  
410-244-7000

DATE: February 7, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 173 – *Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization*

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The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 173.

House Bill 173 would decriminalize possession of items that can be used to inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise consume a controlled dangerous substance. Reducing the harm caused by substance use has been a priority of the General Assembly. The decriminalization of paraphernalia proposed by this legislation will continue to help ensure that people are accessing services, such as syringe service programs, and will avoid unnecessary arrest and incarceration. Decriminalization will provide greater incentive to seek treatment as people who are using substances will be less afraid of law enforcement interaction. In decriminalizing paraphernalia, the State will also reduce the need for people to re-use certain items that may contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases. This will have a positive public health impact on the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. Further, the collateral damage of unnecessary incarceration continues to harm people in Maryland, and disproportionately people of color. Passage of House Bill 173 will demonstrate a commitment to reframing substance use as a public health issue, not a criminal issue. A favorable report is requested.