



## **HB 173 – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization**

**Committee: Judiciary**

**Date: February 7, 2023**

**POSITION: Support**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for a loved one with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a child, youth or adult with a mental health, substance use or gambling challenge.

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MCF strongly supports HB 173.

The decriminalization of the possession of drug paraphernalia in Maryland is long overdue. It is one part of an overarching strategy that strives to get people with substance use disorders the treatment help that they need, rather than end up in correctional facilities.

But it is not just the possession of drug paraphernalia that must be decriminalized – distribution of drug paraphernalia must be included as well. This is especially needed to promote the use of harm reduction strategies. The decriminalization of paraphernalia proposed by this legislation will help to ensure that people are accessing services, such as syringe service programs, and will avoid unnecessary arrest and incarceration, which will reduce the need for people to re-use 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.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on HB 173.

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