



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair and
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 13, 2024

RE: **HB 706 Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization**

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE HB 706**. This bill would decriminalize the use or possession of drug paraphernalia for all other drugs, other than marijuana. These drugs would include dangerous street-level (user amount) doses of heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD, and others.

MCPA and MSA are very concerned this bill creates potential for an escalation in the continually rising opioid overdose rates by decriminalizing the devices to ingest the substance, which is often a trigger of usage and directly leads to the approximately 80K overdose deaths reported annually in the United States.

In addition, if paraphernalia is decriminalized, there would be little to no opportunity to enter treatment through a criminal justice diversion program. These programs include the opportunity, for those who qualify, to avoid criminal prosecution by entering treatment programs, that work in conjunction with the court system, to help users break the cycle of addiction. The danger to public safety that is posed by dangerous street-level drugs, as well as the tools to ingest these drugs, requires a comprehensive Criminal Justice approach, that does not include decriminalization.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE HB 706** and urge an **UNFAVORABLE** Report.