

February 8, 2024
The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 101
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 706
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am writing as a concerned constituent and nursing student from the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing to advocate for the “Drug Paraphernalia for Administration- Decriminalization” 706 House bill sponsored by Carter, currently in the Hearing process. As you know this bill focuses on repealing the prohibition on an individual who participates in either using or possessing drug paraphernalia with the intent to introduce the body to a controlled dangerous substance, penalties for offenses that may involve controlled paraphernalia and drug paraphernalia, manufacturing, distributing or dispensing .

I am currently a student nurse that is working on my clinical hours at SPARC. At SPARC, one of the main focuses is harm reduction and with that it is a program that offers different safety kits including different size syringes for safer drug use. This legislation will benefit the population that SPARC is serving by allowing individuals who inject drugs or carry paraphernalia to feel safer in doing so without potential threats of being criminalized. Harm reduction helps individuals use drugs in a safer way to avoid possible infections or overdose.

With this legislation it will work to decriminalize paraphernalia which ultimately works to help improve the health of individuals who use drugs, reduce blood borne disease, and reduce the fatality rate of overdose¹. Harm reduction helps individuals use drugs in a safer way to avoid possible infections or overdose. A study that focused on effects of long-term street level police intervention on Syringe service programs, showed that SSP’s participants decreased drastically. Concerns about arrest and search may have led individuals to stray away from seeking and carrying sterile syringes ultimately leading to less hygienic injections². A multivariate analysis study showed that 35% of people who injected drugs were concerned about possible arrest while carrying paraphernalia³. Individuals with these concerns were shown to have a 1.5 higher chance of sharing syringes than people who injected but did not hold the same concerns⁴. Pharmacy sales of needles helped with improving access to needles without causing harm to the surrounding communities. SSPs allow individuals to inject drugs safely and safely discard used syringes to acquire new ones. New users of SSPs are five times more likely to enter drug treatment and three times more likely to stop compared to those not in the program.⁵

Decriminalizing drug paraphernalia for administration will be a crucial step towards prioritizing public health and harm reduction. By shifting this public health approach we can work to provide more harm

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6775926/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449157/>

³ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002204269902900101>

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0955395998000760>

⁵ <https://rb.gy/62eqig>

reduction services to reduce the harm associated with drug use and promote individual and community safety.

I am asking you to encourage and support this bill. If this bill is not passed, it will work to increase the probability that individuals who inject drugs will share injection equipment in conditions that might be deemed unsanitary due to the lack of injection supplies. The current law also puts individuals at risk for incarceration who do not use drugs that are involved in harm reduction practices such as giving out or obtaining needles. Decriminalization does not mean that we are encouraging or condoning drug use, but it emphasizes the reality of how drug use has become a public health issue. We must move towards prioritizing prevention, treatment, and harm reduction.

- a. Benefits
 - i. Improve health outcomes of people who use drugs
 - ii. Reduce spread of bloodborne disease
 - iii. Encourage harm reduction methods
 - iv. Help mitigate negative consequences of mass incarceration which disproportionately impacts people of color.
 - v. Encourage PWUDs to be safe by accessing new sanitary syringes

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's paraphernalia laws and emphasize that possession of harm reduction supplies to prevent infectious disease is not a crime. We ask that the House Judiciary Committee give HB706 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Rose Tran

JHUSON MSN Candidate