



January 29, 2025

The Honorable William C. (Will) Smith, JR., Esq.  
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East Wing  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 370  
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I, Rachel Luce (services manager at Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition) support Senate Bill 370 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization) which will revise existing criminal law to remove items that could be used to consume drugs from what is considered drug paraphernalia, effectively decriminalizing possession of those items.

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition's mission is to "mobilize community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the racist war on drugs and anti-sex worker policies. We advocate for harm reduction as a part of a broader movement for social justice." We are a state authorized Overdose Response Program since 2014 and a Syringe Service Program since 2019 after state legislation was passed in 2016.

Each week, I engage with hundreds of participants in Baltimore City who are receiving services through our SSP. We distribute sterile syringes and other safer drug use supplies including tools for injection alternatives, wound care, hygiene supplies, and snacks. Our goal is to mitigate transmission of diseases like HIV and HCV, while empowering people to make decisions that feel healthiest for them. The provision and receipt of these services are authorized and protected by the state under [MD Health-General §24-901-909](#). We provide each of our participants a card that verifies their participation in our SSP under this law, but unfortunately there is a dangerous gap in the protections of this law, which Senate Bill 370 addresses.

In addition to distribution of syringes, BHRC also accepts used syringes from our participants and conducts syringe cleanups around our outreach locations so that used needles may be disposed of safely and without posing a threat to the neighborhood's health. However, under the current law and its inconsistent and misinformed application by law enforcement across the state, people who use drugs and their loved ones are put in incredibly unsafe and vulnerable positions. Simply carrying these tools and other items that may be considered paraphernalia can result in years of sentencing. This discourages our participants from utilizing state



authorized services to safely dispose of syringes, and encourages syringes to be anonymously littered around neighborhoods due to fear of prosecution.

Our participant verification cards do not provide sufficient protection from senseless criminalization for carrying safer drug use supplies and other overdose response equipment. The most straightforward way to reduce harmful engagement with law enforcement and the justice system for the long term is to decriminalize paraphernalia. This allows people the safety to carry syringes, whether they are distributing secondhand to a friend from an SSP or have the intention to return used syringes to an appropriate disposal site, without the fear of being punished for looking out for their community.

Voting in favor of this bill demonstrates a commitment to community health and safety for already vulnerable and targeted groups in Maryland. Moving this bill forward helps to fill dangerous gaps that exist in the legal protections offered by [MD Health-General §24-901-909](#).

We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's paraphernalia laws and clarify that possession of harm reduction supplies to prevent infectious disease is not a crime. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB370 a favorable report.**

For more information about Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, our direct outreach services, or my favorable position on this bill, please contact Rachel Luce at [rachel@baltimoreharmreduction.org](mailto:rachel@baltimoreharmreduction.org).

Thank you for your consideration,  
Rachel Luce