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The Honorable Luke Clippinger
101 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN SUPPORT OF

House Bill #556: Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. In our work with and on behalf of transgender and gender-diverse Marylanders, we have seen firsthand how the criminalization of syringes as "drug paraphernalia" contributes to the harassment and overpolicing of transgender Marylanders.

Transgender people, especially transgender people of color, are routinely singled out by police regardless of any evidence of wrongdoing. Unfortunately, Maryland's current law criminalizing possession of hypodermic syringes and needles contributes to this by empowering police to treat a medical device that is in many cases used for gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) as evidence of illicit drug use or even of intent to distribute illicit drugs.

While transition-related care can take many different forms for transgender people, intramuscular or subcutaneous injection of estradiol or testosterone as part of GAHT is fairly common, especially among transgender people for whom oral estradiol pills or testosterone gels have proven unsuccessful. Transgender people do not deserve to face arrest or criminal charges simply because we have our medical supplies with us.

In addition, access to sterile syringes is a broader public health necessity, and when our community members cannot safely acquire or keep medically necessary supplies, inappropriate reuse and sharing of supplies becomes more likely. Not only does access to sterile single use syringes help halt transmission of blood-borne pathogens, it also reduces the pain of injection of medically-necessary and life-saving medications like GAHT.

Restrictions on possession of syringes has also led to significant issues in obtaining supplies, even when individuals have a prescription and all of their documentation. Many pharmacies across Maryland are "low syringe pharmacies," keeping only a minimal supply of syringes on hand—if any at all. Because of this, some members of our community members order year-long



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supplies of syringes in bulk, but because this option is contingent on insurance or other resources, it is unavailable to the vast majority of people.

Maryland's criminalization of syringes adds worries of criminal charges for possession on top of limited access, meaning Marylanders who need syringes for medical care find themselves in constant fear that either their access to supplies will be cut off or that they will be charged with a crime if it isn't.

This is an urgent matter of public health, public wellness, and equity, and therefore we urge a favorable report on House Bill 556.