

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Chair Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
100-101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 556 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization)

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Good Trouble Church supports House Bill (HB) 556 Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization. This legislation will revise existing criminal law by removing items that could be used to consume drugs from their classification as drug paraphernalia. Many of us, including myself, have lived and or living experience with drug use.

A grass-roots, Christ-rooted, faith expansive community coming together in the name of healing and human flourishing, Good Trouble Church is a ministry centering love and freedom, leadership and liberation, community care, and sacred ceremony. Started by those who have been made vulnerable by systemic racism and the war on drugs, Good Trouble Church places harm reduction at the center of everything we do.

For many years, the punitive policies enacted in the name of the racist war on drugs have forced people who use drugs to face incarceration, suffer social and emotional isolation, and engage in risky behaviors that put their health and that of others at risk. We believe that our community and every community in Maryland deserve more. We believe people who use drugs deserve dignity, respect, equitable health care, and justice. HB 556 is a step towards healing instead of harm.

Every scientific and medical organization to study the issue has shown that legal access to sterile supplies reduces the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other blood-borne diseases. For these health benefits to materialize in Maryland, people who use drugs need to feel as though they can access supplies without law enforcement repercussions.

Allowing people to use drugs more safely with the proper tools is positive for everyone in the community- not only in slowing/stopping the spread of infectious disease, but also in lifting the stigma that isolates people who use drugs.

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 House Judiciary Committee give HB 556 a favorable report.

Thank You,
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