

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,

The Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy (MASDP) strongly supports House Bill 556 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia for Administration - Decriminalization), which seeks to repeal the prohibition against the use or possession of certain items associated with drug consumption.

MASDP is a new advocacy group led by individuals with lived and living experience with drugs. Our mission is to promote evidence-based policies informed by the voices and expertise of those directly impacted. We passionately believe that this bill will provide meaningful benefits to individuals, our healthcare systems, and the broader community.

Decriminalizing drug paraphernalia will ensure that individuals who use drugs have access to safe and legal materials, such as sterile syringes and pipes, without the fear of legal consequences. Research consistently shows that access to such materials reduces the risk of overdose complications and the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C. By removing the stigma and legal barriers tied to obtaining clean and safe supplies, this legislation empowers individuals to prioritize their health and safety.

In addition to promoting the health and well-being of individuals, this bill offers significant benefits to Maryland's overburdened healthcare system. By reducing cases of infectious diseases and overdose-related complications, it will result in fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations, easing the strain on already limited healthcare resources. This relief is especially important given the state's ongoing budgetary challenges.

Finally, this bill will bring a significant benefit to our communities by reducing drug-related litter. As someone in recovery after more than 25 years of active addiction, I speak from personal experience—when individuals fear legal repercussions, they are less likely to dispose of used paraphernalia properly. This leads to greater litter in public spaces. Decriminalization, on the other hand, encourages the use of safe disposal methods, reducing waste and minimizing risks like accidental needle sticks for children, sanitation workers, and others.

In conclusion, House Bill 556 represents a practical, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to improving public health, reducing strain on our healthcare system, and fostering safer communities. **We respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to give House Bill 556 a favorable report.**

Respectfully,

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