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Uploaded by: Abigail Winiker

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327

(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I, Abigail Winiker, PhD, am writing to express my explicit support for Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

By way of introduction, I am currently an Assistant Scientist in the Department of Health, Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, where I also completed a Masters of Science and a Doctoral degree. I also serve as the Program Director for the Bloomberg Overdose Prevention Initiative, where I work to promote the adoption of evidence-based policies to support the health of people who use drugs and/or are living with a substance use disorder. I also create and implement guidance on evidence-based state and local level opioid settlement fund spending.

Extensive public health research supports the effectiveness of ending paraphernalia penalties on health and community-level outcomes. Paraphernalia decriminalization policies are associated with *less* public syringe litter, leading to cleaner, safer communities. Further, the criminalization of paraphernalia is shown to deter people who use drugs from the use of syringe service programs and can more broadly limit the implementation of such programs in community settings. Syringe exchange programs are unequivocally associated with reductions in infectious disease transmission and risky behaviors linked to overdose risk.

Additionally, ending paraphernalia penalties would undoubtedly increase the potential for Maryland's valuable opioid settlement funds to support and expand life-saving interventions. Decision-makers are encouraged to invest these funds towards evidence-based programs such as syringe exchange and drug testing programming, yet existing paraphernalia laws may disincentive settlement allocations due to fears of legal ambiguity that put programs, staff, and participants at risk. For these dollars to have the biggest impact, it's critical that the interventions proven to save life, reduce healthcare costs, and increase access to treatment and recovery are accessible and confidently funded.

I deeply believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Abigail Winiker at awinike1@jhu.edu. Please note that the views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Johns Hopkins University or the Johns Hopkins Health System.

Sincerely,

Abigail Winiker, PhD, MSPH

Baltimore City, Maryland

SB327 TRAC - Google Docs.pdf

Uploaded by: Amy Isler

Position: FAV



SB327

Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia
Prohibitions – Repeal
February 4, 2026
Position: Favorable

Esteemed Chairman Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, **Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition strongly supports SB327, Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal.**

Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is a trans-led, statewide coalition that fought to pass the Trans Health Equity Act and the Trans Shield Act. Our coalition includes trans people and allies, healthcare providers, parents, and attorneys. Our work focuses on securing health care access for trans Marylanders, and fighting for the safety, dignity, and respect of trans Marylanders who are incarcerated. SB327 is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of trans Marylanders.

Paraphernalia law criminalizes otherwise legal objects. Syringes can be purchased legally at a pharmacy or online without a prescription. Laws criminalizing drug paraphernalia create additional hazards for transgender people who may sometimes get syringes outside of a pharmacy. Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition supplies syringes for hormone usage, as a result of limited access to affordable gender affirming care. The risk of criminalization in this community is compounded by disproportionate poverty, lack of housing, race, and targeting by law enforcement. Legal items should remain legal.

Twenty other states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use. Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia. Maryland's paraphernalia laws are outdated. With the legislative support this body has shown to transgender Marylanders and their health care providers in the passing of protections for gender affirming care in the past, we trust that this body will continue its work to shore up protections for trans Marylanders, who are disproportionately impacted by criminalization of drug paraphernalia.

We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items

legal. **TRAC asks that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

Maryland Letter of Support - Impact MN^J 2.3.26.pd

Uploaded by: Arielle McHenry

Position: FAV



February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) - FAVORABLE

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Impact MN, a state-wide, cross-sector coalition promoting health-based approaches to drug use in Minnesota.

In 2023, Minnesota became the first state in the country to remove most penalties associated with drug paraphernalia possession. Lawmakers recognized that this was a practical, evidence-based policy change that would strengthen both public health and public safety by reducing overdose risks, preventing disease, and lessening litter and other community impacts.

Experience has shown that harsh penalties for drug use and paraphernalia do not help people and only worsen the tragic overdose crisis. Tougher laws push people toward unsafe practices and illicit markets, resulting in preventable disease and overdose. These increased risks are particularly prevalent among low-income communities and communities of color. These penalties also threaten health professionals' ability to provide legitimate public health and community safety efforts.

In Minnesota, those lessons hold true. Since the policy change took effect, the results have been encouraging. Communities report cleaner public spaces as people safely dispose of items without fear of arrest. Service providers have reached more racially and geographically diverse populations by offering safer materials for use and disposal. Participants in syringe service programs — where updated paraphernalia laws improved engagement — are five times more likely to enter treatment and three times more likely to stop using drugs than those without access to such services.

While long-term outcomes are still emerging, the impact is already clear: removing penalties for paraphernalia possession helps shift the response to substance use from punishment toward practical solutions that save lives, reduce disease, and promote recovery.



Therefore, Impact MN is strongly in support of [HB551](#) / [SB327](#) (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal). **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position and Minnesota's experience, please contact Ari McHenry at ari@impactmn.org

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Arielle McHenry, MPH
Coalition Administrator, Impact MN

SB327

Uploaded by: Brandon Scott

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB0327

February 5, 2025

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 327 – Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibition – Repeal

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 327.

This is a priority bill for the BCA. It repeals the prohibition on possessing drug paraphernalia. This will *not* encourage drug use. Rather, **it will facilitate participation in public health programs and services that are proven to reduce injection drug use and HIV infection.** The current paraphernalia laws are a known barrier for people seeking help.

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is one of eight organizations operating an “OADPOP,” or “opioid-associated disease prevention and outreach program” (also called “syringe services program” or “needle exchange”) in Baltimore City. OADPOPs, which have been legal in Baltimore City for more than 30 years and statewide since 2016, provide people with sterile syringes and collect used ones. They also provide referrals to substance use disorder treatment, on-site overdose prevention and response education, wound care, peer support, HIV and syphilis testing, reproductive health services, and more.

- According to the CDC, OADPOP participants are **5x more likely to enter drug treatment** and **3.5x more likely to stop injection drug use.**ⁱ
- 30+ years of evidence shows that OADPOPs **do not increase overdoses or drug use.** They **do help prevent overdose deaths.**ⁱ
- OADPOPs are cost-effective. In fact, in 2015, they saved Indiana taxpayers **\$120M** by stopping the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C during a large outbreak in the state.^{ii,iii}
- **OADPOPs reduce syringe litter.**^{iv,v} Over the past ten years, BCHD's OADPOP clients have returned **nearly 10 million syringes.**^{vi}
- In 1994, when Baltimore City's first OADPOP opened, injection drug users accounted for 63% of new HIV infections in the city. As of 2022, they accounted for less than 10%.^{vii} This is due in no small part to the fact that people can now access sterile syringes to keep themselves and their partners safe.

Although Maryland statutes governing OADPOPs protect clients from being found guilty of violating § 5-619 of the Criminal Law Article, which prohibits possession of syringes and other paraphernalia, clients – and potential clients – of Baltimore City OADPOPs routinely share that they fear potential harassment from law enforcement if stopped while in possession of syringes. While the current law intends to discourage drug use, it instead deters people from accessing services proven to reduce injection drug use and improve public health and safety. As such, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 327.

Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov/>

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- ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Syringe Services Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>
- ⁱⁱ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2021). Syringe Services Programs. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/syringe-services-programs>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Sights E, Ray B, Watson D, Huynh P, Lawrence C. (2018). The Implementation of syringe services programs (SSPs) in Indiana: benefits, barriers, and best practices. IUPUI Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health. Retrieved from https://fsph.iupui.edu/doc/research-centers/SSP_Report_20180516.pdf
- ^{iv} National Association of Counties. (2023). Syringe Services Programs: A NACo Opioid Solutions Strategy Brief. Retrieved from <https://www.naco.org/resource/syringe-services-programs-naco-opioid-solutions-strategy-brief>
- ^v National Harm Reduction Coalition. (2021). Let's Talk Syringe Litter. Retrieved from <https://www.njlm.org/Archive/ViewFile/Item/1593>
- ^{vi} Baltimore City Health Department Data
- ^{vii} Center for HIV Surveillance, Epidemiology and Evaluation, Maryland Department of Health. (2023). Baltimore City Annual HIV Epidemiological Profile 2022. Retrieved from <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/CHSE/SiteAssets/Pages/statistics/Baltimore-City-Annual-HIV-Epidemiological-Profile-2022.pdf>

2026 SB327_ BRIDGES Coalition_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: C. A.

Position: FAV



February 2, 2026

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 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal)-
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

BRIDGES Coalition for Overdose Prevention Sites **fervently supports SB327 - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal**. This bill will repeal existing criminal law to effectively end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Founded in March 2017, BRIDGES Coalition for Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) is a statewide advocacy coalition of 30+ organizations working to end overdose and criminalization by promoting safe spaces, dignity, health, and justice for people who use drugs. Our mission to reduce the individual and communal harms associated with public drug use in Maryland closely aligns with the public health and safety goals of SB327.

Legal items should remain legal! Paraphernalia law criminalizes otherwise legal, everyday objects - small plastic bags, spoons, and scales. Syringes can be purchased legally at a pharmacy without a prescription. These *become* illegal when associated with suspected drugs, even if no drugs are present.

Fear is a barrier for safety. Fear of arrest leads people to share syringes rather than carry sterile supplies; disease transmission is caused by shared paraphernalia, not by drug use itself. Access to sterile paraphernalia is proven to reduce HIV and hepatitis transmission. Fear of arrest also leads people to dispose of used syringes as soon as possible, even if they're in public spaces. Ending paraphernalia penalties is proven to decrease syringe litter in public spaces like sidewalks and playgrounds.

We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve health and safety for *all* Marylanders, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Judiciary Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For additional information or questions regarding this legislation, please contact BHRC's Community Organizer, Cola at cola@baltimoreharmreduction.org.

The BRIDGES Coalition
Cola Anderson
cola@baltimoreharmreduction.org

SB0327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Co

Uploaded by: Charlotte Hoffman

Position: FAV



Charlotte Persephone Hoffman, Esq.
(they/she)
Policy Director
charlotte@transmaryland.org

Thursday February 5, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN SUPPORT OF

**Senate Bill #327: Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions
- Repeal**

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings 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.



Charlotte Persephone Hoffman, Esq.
(they/she)
Policy Director
charlotte@transmaryland.org

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 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 Senate Bill 327.

SB0327_MHAMD_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Dan Martin

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 327 Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and
Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal**

Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 5, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 327.

SB 327 will repeal prohibitions related to drug paraphernalia, which will support public health initiatives and reduce the criminalization of drug users.

Initiatives like Maryland's [Syringe Services Program \(SSP\)](#) are key tools in efforts to reduce fatal overdoses across the state. SSPs connect people to sterile supplies, health care, and social services. They are proven to save lives, help those with substance use disorders get needed support, prevent overdose deaths, and reduce the impact of drug use on the community.

Unfortunately, Maryland's criminalization of drug paraphernalia deters participation in these life-saving services. Fear of arrest is a major barrier to broad uptake of SSPs among drug users. This criminalization leads people to share syringes rather than carry sterile supplies, which unnecessarily increases preventable disease transmission and death.

Maryland has taken steps in recent years to reduce fatal overdoses – and progress has been made – but we still lost over 1,300 friends and family members to an overdose in 2025.¹ Ending paraphernalia penalties is a proven, cost-free way to improve health and public safety. For this reason, MHAMD supports SB 327 and urges a favorable report.

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>

SB 327_Paraphernalia Repeal_BHSB_FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Dan Rabbitt

Position: FAV



February 5, 2026

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore strongly supports SB 327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal. Repealing the prohibition of the possession and use of drug paraphernalia would promote trust between harm reduction programs and people who use drugs while having a negligible impact on public safety. Maryland is falling behind other states in adopting this common sense approach. Close to 20 states have fully decriminalized syringe possession and two, Minnesota and Alaska, have no law prohibiting paraphernalia possession at all.¹ BHSB urges the General Assembly to join the Baltimore City Administration in supporting this legislation and to help Maryland use its scarce resources to save lives rather than punitive approaches such as arrest or prosecution for drug paraphernalia.

The number of overdose deaths in Maryland has recently declined but remains staggeringly high. Over 1,700 people died of fatal overdose in Maryland in 2024, including over 750 who died in Baltimore City.² The rate of overdose appears to have continued to decline in 2025, but the figures are not yet final. While these trends are encouraging, the state must continue to make preventing overdoses a top priority. Overdose remains one of the leading causes of death for young people and more work remains to be done.

SB 327 is an important step in the direction of putting overdose prevention first. Harm reduction services such as syringe service programs are among the effective overdose prevention strategies. These programs help individuals to reduce the harm of using drugs but also help build trusting relationship that often lead to considering treatment and recovery. The potential for arrest or prosecution for drug paraphernalia that is being returned to a harm reduction program breaks that trust and pushes people who use drugs further into the shadows. By eliminating that risk through decriminalizing drug paraphernalia, Maryland can help ensure harm reduction program remain safe spaces for the people who use them and better direct our state’s law enforcement resources to improve public safety.

The continued criminalization of drug paraphernalia only makes the delivery of effective, empathetic substance use treatment harder. At a time when the federal government is putting pressure on harm reduction programs and publicly opposing them, Maryland should stand up for evidence-based overdose prevention. **BHSB urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to support SB 327.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

Endnotes:

¹ Network for Public Health Law. *Harm Reduction Laws in the United States*. August 1, 2023. Available at:

<https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/50-State-Survey-Harm-Reduction-Laws-in-the-United-States.pdf>

² Maryland Department of Health Overdose Data Portal, available at: <https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx>

SB327_ FAV_ BHRC.pdf

Uploaded by: Darci Curwen-Garber

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026



The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC) writes to express our strong support of **Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal)** to end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based, cost-free reform that prioritizes public health and community safety for all Marylanders. BHRC is proud to be one of 29 MDH-authorized syringe service programs (SSPs) in Maryland. We partner with local churches for street outreach to ensure people who are actively using drugs have critical survival items and connections stabilizing care. The criminalization of paraphernalia directly and negatively impacts us as a program and our participants.

Ending paraphernalia penalties improves community safety and public spaces. We know intimately that paraphernalia criminalization discourages safe syringe disposal. We hear consistently from our participants that holding on to used syringes until they can get to a sharps container is legally dangerous for them. Participants that clean up syringes in their neighborhoods and return them for safe disposal do so at great risk to themselves. Policies that remove paraphernalia penalties are even recommended by the CDC for communities that want to reduce syringe litter. (1) Cleaner sidewalks, parks, and playgrounds benefit families, businesses, and local governments across Maryland.

Ending paraphernalia penalties strengthens Maryland's public health response. Fear of arrest is a major barrier to SSP participation, which connect people to sterile supplies, healthcare, recovery supports, and social services. SSP participants are significantly more likely to enter treatment and reduce drug use. (2) Paraphernalia penalties also limit participation in the Maryland Department of Health's Rapid Analysis of Drugs (RAD) program, weakening one of the state's only tools to track what's in our illicit drug supply. Currently, RAD cannot legally exist in every county, leaving huge gaps in knowledge that participants, programs, doctors, and governments rely on. Paraphernalia criminalization undermines both of these life-saving programs.

Access to sterile paraphernalia reduces disease and saves money. Extensive research shows syringe access reduces the transmission of HIV, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne diseases.(3) Criminalization increases risk by driving syringe sharing, a fact supported by both participant experiences and research. Prevention is far less expensive than treatment. A sterile syringe costs pennies, while lifetime HIV care costs approximately \$618,000 per person. Preventing infections saves Maryland millions in long-term healthcare costs.(4)

Ending paraphernalia penalties improves safety for law enforcement and does not increase crime. When people fear arrest, they are less likely to disclose syringes during police encounters, increasing the risk of needle-stick injuries. States that have repealed paraphernalia laws report improved officer safety. (5,6) Drug enforcement remains fully intact under this bill. Possession, sale, and manufacturing of illegal drugs remain illegal. Syringe access does not increase drug use or crime, a finding supported by studies conducted nationally and in Maryland. (8,9)

Ending paraphernalia penalties is a proven, cost-effective policy that strengthens Maryland's existing life-saving programs, maximizes our state's ability to track and adapt to a toxic illicit drug supply, enhances community safety for families and first responders, and brings Maryland law in line with evidence-based best practices. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Darci Curwen-Garber, BHRC Policy Manager, at darci@baltimoreharmreduction.org.

Sincerely,

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC)
Baltimore City, Maryland

1. CDC, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, *Needs-Based Syringe Distribution and Disposal at Syringe Services Programs*, Sept. 2020. Available at <https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/Bne4aN5Mc06Y6ZgPDXM7sQ.pdf>
2. CDC, *Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)*, 2025. Available at <https://restoredcdc.org/www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>
3. Davis, Corey S et al. "Paraphernalia Laws, Criminalizing Possession and Distribution of Items Used to Consume Illicit Drugs, and Injection-Related Harm." *American journal of public health* vol. 109,11 (2019): 1564-1567. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.305268
4. Schackman, Bruce R et al. "The lifetime cost of current human immunodeficiency virus care in the United States." *Medical care* vol. 44,11 (2006): 990-7. doi:10.1097/01.mlr.0000228021.89490.2a
5. Franco, Carol Y et al. ""We're actually more of a likely ally than an unlikely ally": relationships between syringe services programs and law enforcement." *Harm reduction journal* vol. 18,1 81. 4 Aug. 2021, doi:10.1186/s12954-021-00515-2
6. Groseclose, S L et al. "Impact of increased legal access to needles and syringes on practices of injecting-drug users and police officers--Connecticut, 1992-1993." *Journal of acquired immune deficiency syndromes and human retrovirology* vol. 10,1 (1995): 82-9.
7. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, *Effectiveness of Syringe Service Programs*, 2023. Available at <https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/syringeservice.cfm>
8. Marx, M A et al. "Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program." *American journal of public health* vol. 90,12 (2000): 1933-6. doi:10.2105/ajph.90.12.1933

SB 327 - LAC - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Deborah Steinberg

Position: FAV

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February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions
- Repeal) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings
Committee Members,

Legal Action Center strongly supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug
Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all
penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that
prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Legal Action Center is a nonprofit organization that uses legal and policy strategies to
fight discrimination, build health equity, and restore opportunity for people
with prior criminal legal system involvement, substance use disorders, and
HIV/AIDS.

As an organization, we support policies that create environments that restore
opportunities and build health equity while prioritizing care over
criminalization. Addiction and substance use disorder must be treated with a public
health approach, not a criminal one. Removing the State penalties for paraphernalia
prioritizes the health, dignity, and safety of people who use drugs.

We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve infectious
disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We
ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a
favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Teresa
Miller at tmiller@lac.org.

Sincerely,
Teresa Miller
Teresa Miller
National Director of Health Initiatives
Legal Action Center

SB327.pdf

Uploaded by: Dillon McManus

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327

(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I, Dillon McManus, strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

I am a Baltimore City resident with over a decade of experience in social work, public health, and harm reduction.

Ending penalties for paraphernalia is a simple and clear way for a number of important public health and public safety outcomes to take place. It would make it easier for syringe service programs and their participants to understand the legal protections allotted to them, it would reduce confusion among law enforcement about what is and isn't protected materials and reduce time and labor taken to filing paraphernalia charges that will be dropped later and reduce syringe/paraphernalia litter that they would come in contact with. Further, it would allow the state's Rapid Analysis of Drugs program to expand beyond syringe service programs and allow other programs to be able to sample – thus having a much greater awareness of how the drug supply changes in specific places overtime.

I believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Dillon McManus, Dillon.mcmanus22@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Dillon McManus
Baltimore City

SB0327_FAV_MedChi_Drug Paraphernalia for Administr

Uploaded by: Drew Vetter

Position: FAV



The Maryland State Medical Society
1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915
1.800.492.1056
www.medchi.org

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 5, 2026
Senate Bill 327 – *Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal*
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 327.

Senate Bill 327 would decriminalize possession of items that can be used to inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise consume a controlled dangerous substance. Reducing the harm caused by substance use has been a longstanding priority of MedChi. The decriminalization of paraphernalia proposed by this legislation strengthens the State’s harm reduction approach to help ensure that people are accessing services, such as syringe service programs, and will avoid unnecessary arrest and incarceration. Decriminalization will provide a greater incentive to seek treatment, as people who are using substances will be less fearful of potential law enforcement interaction. In decriminalizing paraphernalia, the State will also reduce the need for people to reuse certain items that may contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases. This will have a positive public health impact on the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. Further, the collateral damage of unnecessary incarceration continues to harm people in Maryland, and disproportionately people of color. Passage of Senate Bill 327 will demonstrate a commitment to reframing substance use as a public health issue, not a criminal issue. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Andrew G. Vetter
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

Testimony_SB327_2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Edward Traver

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions -
Repeal) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings
Committee Members,

I, Dr. Edward Traver, strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug
Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all
penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that
prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

I write to plead for you to do everything in your power to pass House Bill 0173 to
decriminalize drug paraphernalia. I am an assistant professor and infectious disease
doctor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and a resident of District 46 for
over 7 years. Every day I take care of patients who are infected with **HIV, Hepatitis B,
and Hepatitis C**. These chronic viral infections cause cancer, secondary infections, and
early death. These viruses are acquired by using equipment (paraphernalia) that had
previously been used by someone else. **Using new, sterile equipment completely
prevents the transmission of these infections from using drugs**. Repealing the
penalties for drug use equipment will enable people to better access sterile equipment
and avoid these terrible, costly infections.

On behalf of our neighbors and fellow citizens, **I ask that the Senate Judicial
Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report**. It will serve to
make their lives safer, healthier, and longer. For more information about this position,
please contact me at etraver@ihv.umaryland.edu.

Sincerely,



Edward C. Traver, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Maryland School of Medicine

Resident of Baltimore City, District 46

2026 SB 327 FAV OPD.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Hilliard

Position: FAV



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER
KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER
ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB327 Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: February 3, 2026

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 327.

Criminalizing drug addiction makes Maryland less safe. Maryland has taken numerous steps to acknowledge that substance use, and abuse, must be treated through a public health lens. Senate Bill 327 would take a small important step to further encourage public health approach to substance use by repealing Criminal Law § 5-619 and § 5-620, which criminalize the possession of drug paraphernalia and controlled paraphernalia. The criminalization of addiction generally, and paraphernalia for administration specifically, drives individuals using drugs further into the shadows—making it less likely that Marylanders struggling with addiction will seek out the help that they need. In addition, criminalizing paraphernalia that is used for the administration makes drug use more dangerous. This is because it limits access to health care and other means to reduce the risk of overdose and infection by blood-borne diseases. This is why decriminalization is critical. Decriminalization—a process of removing criminal sanctions for a previously criminalized behavior—is a policy that has been supported by groups like the American Public Health Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, American Pharmacists Association, UNAIDS, and the World Health Organization, and others.¹

¹UN News. UNAIDS upholds decriminalization, access to services, on International Drug Users' Day. 2021. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1104552>; The WHO calls for decriminalisation. *The Economist*. 2014. <https://www.economist.com/newsbook/2014/07/17/the-who-calls-for-decriminalisation?fsrc=scn%2Ftw%2Fte%2Fbl%2Fed%2Fdrugs>; American Public Health Association. Defining and implementing a public health response to drug use and misuse. 2013.

Decriminalization allows for investment in harm reduction measures, substance use and abuse services, and social safety net expansions, not jail.²

Senate Bill 327 is also crucial to reduce the harm of the opioid epidemic. Maryland has moved past the outdated, unscientific beliefs that addiction is a choice or a moral failing. Addiction is a health problem that must be treated as such. The Maryland General Assembly has recognized this fact and acted on this knowledge by providing opportunities for sentencing modification and drug treatment for individuals in the criminal system due to addiction. We at the Office of the Public Defender have seen the immense benefits these laws have had in helping our clients and their families lead safer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives.

Senate Bill 327 would continue the General Assembly's mission to address the issue of addiction productively and to make Maryland an even safer and healthier state. Decriminalizing drug paraphernalia for administration will decrease the risks of drug overdose and decrease the stigma and fear that prevents so many from accessing treatment for drug addiction.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 327.

Submitted by: Government Relations Division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.

<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/08/08/04/defining-and-implementing-a-public-health-response-to-drug-use-and-misuse>; American Society of Addiction Medicine. National Addiction Policy Initiatives. 2020.

<https://www.asam.org/advocacy/national-advocacy/national-addiction-policy-initiatives>; American Pharmacists Association. 2023 policy updates. 2023. <https://www.pharmacist.com/About/Leadership/HOD/2023-Policy-Updates>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39215532/>

SB 327 paraphernalia decrim JPR EES Feb 5.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Sterling

Position: FAV

STATEMENT OF
Eric E. Sterling, J.D.¹
SUBMITTED TO
THE MARYLAND SENATE
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
HON. WILLIAM C. SMITH, JR., CHAIR
HON. JEFF WALDSTREICHER, VICE CHAIR
FEBRUARY 5, 2026

IN FAVOR OF
SB0327 Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions²
– Repeal

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Distinguished Senators, I support SB 0327 and urge you to give this urgently need legislation a favorable report. I heartily commend Senator Cory McCray and Delegate Karen Simpson for their leadership in developing this important legislation. The criminal penalties for possession of drug paraphernalia need to be repealed.

Forty years ago, in 1986, I organized the hearings on legislation to ban the shipment of drug paraphernalia through the U.S. Postal Service and in interstate commerce when I was Assistant Counsel to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime. We heard the arguments. Our subcommittee and full committee did not report the legislation! But the sponsor went directly to the House leadership, and the legislation was included in an omnibus anti-drug bill that was enacted in haste after the tragic death of Maryland basketball star, Len Bias. (P.L.99-570, “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986,” Title I, Subtitle O, Prohibition on the Interstate Sale and Transportation of Drug Paraphernalia, Sec. 1821 *et seq.*, 100 STAT. 3207-51). This is the omnibus bill that included the new federal mandatory minimum drug sentences and many other counter-productive measures enacted in a partisan political environment encouraging anti-drug *machismo*.

In the years since, as I have worked on the problems of addiction and the challenge of appropriate control of controlled substances, I have seen how the criminal penalties regarding possession and distribution of “drug paraphernalia” have contributed to the spread of disease and to countless cases of injustice. It is particularly noteworthy that the legislation was enacted in 1986 as the spread of HIV and AIDS was becoming a global epidemic. A primary vector in the transmission of HIV was the sharing of outlawed injection equipment by people who were using drugs. The practice of sharing syringes was driven by the criminal penalties attached to the possession of drug paraphernalia. That remains true today.

The most important people to protect with drug policy are people who use drugs. People who use drugs are at risk of death from overdose and disease. Our most important goal must be to protect

their lives and their health. We must stop sacrificing the lives of people who use drugs to carry out symbolic campaigns of disapproval of drug use. People who don't use drugs are not at risk.

My first cousin, Clifford, died from his addiction over 25 years ago. I fully appreciate the horror and tragedy of addiction for those who suffer and the impact on their loved ones. I fully appreciate the public's legitimate desire to protect society from addiction. And I appreciate the enormous challenge that law enforcement faces in trying to protect our communities from the consequences of addiction and criminal drug distribution. In all those instances, the prohibition on the possession of drug paraphernalia is not helpful.

The key result of this legislation, if enacted, will be to reduce the transmission of disease among drug users and thus save lives. It will not lead to any increase in addiction and will not legitimize or express approval of drug use.

I urge a favorable report.

¹ Eric E. Sterling is a member of the Ministry and Worship Committee of Bethesda Friends Meeting, Bethesda, MD. He testifying on his own behalf. He was Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation (1989-2020). He served on the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council of Montgomery County for a decade. From 1979 to 1989 he was Assistant Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary responsible for drug enforcement and many criminal justice issues. From 2013 to 2017, on the appointment of Gov. Martin O'Malley, he served on the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission and chaired its Policy Committee. From 2022 to 2024, he was Chair the Montgomery County Advisory Commission on Policing. In 2024, Gov. Wes Moore appointed him to serve on the Maryland Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances. He received a B.A. from Haverford College in 1973, and a J.D. from Villanova University Law School in 1976. He has lived in the 18th legislative district since 1998.

EzraTowne_SB0327_Favorable_2026_0203 (JPR).pdf

Uploaded by: Ezra Towne

Position: FAV

EZRA MACLEOD TOWNE

Testimony Favorable to SB0327: Criminal Law - Drug Paraphenalia and Controlled Paraphenalia Prohibitions - Repeal

February 3, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair, Senator Jeff Waldsreicher, Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them. I am writing to you today because I **strongly support SB0327, and ask for a favorable report from the Judicial Proceedings committee.**

As a transgender and pre-diabetic person, I use syringes regularly to administer medicine necessary to maintain my health. These syringes are currently defined as both controlled and drug paraphenalia, and current Maryland law would subject me to arrest while carrying them to my local health clinic in order to properly dispose of them in exchange for new syringes. This is simply unacceptable.

At the point of potential arrest, officers would be unable to distinguish what my hypodermic syringes and needles are used for. I can legally pick up my syringes and needles at a pharmacy for injecting the medication needed to keep me healthy. What is the point of criminalizing things that can be legally obtained at a pharmacy, even without a prescription?

Maryland is falling behind other states in this matter: 20 states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use.¹

In addition, harm reduction advocates and scientists have proven that access to sterile syringes in needle exchange programs does not increase illicit drug use - even if an individual may be using them to inject controlled substances.²

Decriminalization means that drug users are less likely to share needles and spread HIV and Hepatitis C, and other blood borne diseases. Risky behavior increases when possession of these items are criminalized.³ Additionally, when drug users feel safe disposing of used syringes and needles, they also gain access to critical services and drug use prevention resources. Drug users are 5x more likely to enter treatment and 3x more likely to stop using drugs when they have access to such resources.⁴

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on SB0327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphenalia and Controlled Paraphenalia Prohibitions - Repeal.

Sincerely,
Ezra MacLeod Towne
Wheaton, D18

¹Public Health Law Network, Harm Reduction Legal Project (2025)

² Marx, M A et al. "Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program." *American journal of public health* vol. 90,12 (2000): 1933-6. doi:10.2105/ajph.90.12.1933

³U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, *Effectiveness of Syringe Service Programs*, 2023. Available at <https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/publications/esp/syringeservice.cfm>

⁴Davis, Corey S et al. "Paraphernalia Laws, Criminalizing Possession and Distribution of Items Used to Consume Illicit Drugs, and Injection-Related Harm." *American journal of public health* vol. 109,11 (2019): 1564-1567. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.30526

Favorable.Good Trouble Church.Senate.Bill.327.Test

Uploaded by: Gregory Frailey

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

Good Trouble Church supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal). 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, 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. Senate Bill 327 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 criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.

Thank You,
Greg Frailey
Harm Reduction Lead, Good Trouble Church
gregfrailey@gmail.com
717-798-1764

MVLS Testimony in Support of SB327 Criminal Law -

Uploaded by: Heather Heiman

Position: FAV



JUSTICE FOR ALL

MARYLAND SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY OF MARYLAND VOLUNTEER LAWYERS SERVICE
IN SUPPORT OF SB 327 CRIMINAL LAW – DRUG PARAPHERNALIA
AND CONTROLLED PARAPHERNALIA PROHIBITIONS – REPEAL

Susan Francis
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 3, 2025

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Chairman Smith and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 327.

My name is Heather Heiman, and I am an attorney with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) and manager of MVLS' partnership with the Human Trafficking Prevention Project (HTPP). MVLS is the oldest and largest pro bono civil legal service provider to low-income Marylanders. Since MVLS' founding in 1981, our statewide panel of over 700 volunteers has provided free legal services to over 100,000 Marylanders in a wide range of civil legal matters. In FY25, MVLS volunteers and staff lawyers placed and closed 3,233 cases, providing legal services to 6,770 clients and immediate family members across the State.

In FY17, MVLS began a partnership with the Human Trafficking Prevention Project, a co-grant project funded through the Governor's Office of Crime, Control, and Prevention (GOCCP). Through this partnership, MVLS provides pro bono post-conviction relief such as expungement, shielding, and vacatur, as well as assistance with consumer, housing, and family law matters to those who meet the legal definition of a victim of human trafficking, and others who are put at high risk for exploitation. Since the inception of the partnership, MVLS has served over 400 clients who were survivors of human trafficking or placed at high risk for exploitation, many of whom sought legal help with criminal record relief for drug-related charges and convictions, including possession of paraphernalia. For reasons explained below, MVLS respectfully requests that the Committee returns a favorable report on SB 327.

For many individuals MVLS serves, substance use is a common predictor of and reaction to their experiences of being trafficked. Many trafficking survivors report self-medicating to cope with what has happened to them while being trafficked. Moreover, traffickers frequently use drugs to recruit and control their victims. Being able to receive and retain safe and sterile supplies without fear of arrest for their possession will improve the health outcomes of trafficking survivors and create further opportunities for their engagement with support services.

The broad understanding that drug supplies are illegal in Maryland, and fear of arrest and convictions for paraphernalia possession, creates additional barriers to trafficking survivors seeking help from law enforcement. After an arrest or conviction for paraphernalia possession, trafficking survivors must then contend with the collateral consequences of involvement with the criminal justice system and proactively seek criminal record relief, a process often acutely re-traumatizing for the survivor.

Through our expungement work, which is a vital part of the MVLS HTPP partnership, MVLS has assisted many clients who faced the following scenario:

Law enforcement officers arrest a trafficking victim on suspicion of drug possession, often due to having a mostly empty Ziploc bag, a used pipe, or even remnants of cigar paper discovered in a drawer or glove compartment. Despite the lack of evidence of actual drug possession, the prosecution moves forward with just a paraphernalia charge and drops the possession charge. The person then accepts a plea deal, pleading guilty to the paraphernalia charge; despite the State not meeting their burden of proof that the individual possessed drugs, this person now has a drug-related criminal record that will follow them for five years or more.

These collateral consequences trap people in a cycle of abuse and poverty since a criminal record makes it harder to obtain housing or employment.

Moreover, SB 327 helps further the State's efforts to align current law with the Cannabis Reform Act, which allows for the use, distribution, regulation, and taxation of marijuana. Under the current drug paraphernalia criminal statute, law enforcement officers can arrest persons for having paraphernalia used for a drug that is legal.

Senate Bill 327 would reduce this current harm by repealing penalties for paraphernalia possession and lessening the risk of criminalization and negative health outcomes for trafficking survivors. For these reasons, MVLS supports Senate Bill 327. We respectfully urge a favorable report.

FAVORABLE HB0551_SB0327 Drug Paraphernalia and Con

Uploaded by: Jeremy Browning

Position: FAV



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia - Repeal

Bill Number(s): [HB0551/SB0327](#)

Position: FAVORABLE

Date: February 3, 2026

Submitted by: Director Jeremy Browning on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The Hon. William C. Smith, Chair
The Hon. J. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair

House Judiciary Committee

The Hon. J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
The Hon. Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Testimony on Behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

The Commission strongly supports HB551/SB327, which would repeal the prohibition against the possession and use of syringes. This critical measure is an overdue step toward advancing public health, reducing harm, and addressing the disproportionate criminalization of marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

For transgender and gender-diverse individuals, particularly those undergoing gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT), access to sterile syringes is a medical necessity. Current laws that classify syringes as drug paraphernalia may result in transgender Marylanders being unjustly targeted. By decriminalizing possession, HB551/SB327 helps ensure that individuals can carry and obtain necessary medical equipment, for any reason, without fear of legal repercussions.

Beyond LGBTQIA+ communities, this bill promotes broader public health goals by reducing the risks of syringe-sharing and related health complications, such as HIV and hepatitis transmission. Criminalizing harm reduction tools only exacerbates public health crises rather than addressing them.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs urges a favorable report on HB551/SB327 as a necessary step toward health equity, harm reduction, and the protection of basic human rights.

[Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs](#)

100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032

HPP Testimony- SB 327 (FAV).pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Emerson

Position: FAV

Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

BILL NO:	Senate Bill 327
TITLE:	Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal
COMMITTEE:	Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE:	February 5, 2026
POSITION:	FAVORABLE

Senate Bill 327 would end all penalties for possession of paraphernalia. The Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports this bill because it will reduce the risk of infectious disease, arrest, *and* re-exploitation for trafficking survivors who use drugs, many of whom do so to cope with the trauma of their trafficking experience. In addition, protecting secondary distributors from arrest will increase the amount of support available to the most marginalized and isolated people who use drugs, which will decrease these users' risk of a host of harms, including human trafficking.

Legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2016 has allowed for the expansion of syringe services programs (SSPs) statewide in order to distribute harm reduction supplies to prevent transmission of infectious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C. The research supporting the numerous health benefits of SSPs is clear and extensive. **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.** Studies have also shown that access to supplies *does not* increase [improperly discarded needles](#), [rates of drug use](#), or [other criminalized activity](#). In fact, [people who use SSPs are more likely to reduce injections, stop injecting altogether, begin drug treatment, and to remain in drug treatment](#) once they start it.

For these health benefits to materialize however, people need to trust that they can access supplies without law enforcement interference. When supplies are broadly considered illegal, even some registered SSP participants experience harassment and citation from law enforcement who do not understand the confusing patchwork of paraphernalia exceptions.¹ SB 327 would also protect individuals who don't have access to an SSP from arrest, such as Marylanders who live in rural areas and must obtain clean syringes from a pharmacy. [It would also protect individuals known as secondary distributors](#) who deliver syringes on behalf of an SSP to users who are harder to reach because of physical or mental disabilities and other forms of marginalization. Under current law, the use, possession, delivery, or sale of paraphernalia to inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise introduce a controlled dangerous substance into the human body is a criminal offense in Maryland and a first-time violation is subject to a misdemeanor and \$500 maximum fine. Subsequent violations are subject to a misdemeanor, up to two years of imprisonment, and/or a maximum fine of \$2,000. Any arrest, regardless of its outcome, carries with it significant collateral consequences.

Survival Should Not Be Criminalized.

¹ There are several exceptions to paraphernalia criminalization under current law. The Maryland General Assembly repealed the criminal prohibition of cannabis-related paraphernalia in 2015, granted exemption for possession of some drug paraphernalia for participants of syringe service programs in 2016, and repealed the criminal prohibition of items to test or analyze drugs, like fentanyl test strips, in 2018.

Harm reduction methods such as the decriminalization of paraphernalia are especially important to survivors of human trafficking, given that drug use is both a common predictor of, and a reaction to, this horrific crime. [Many trafficking survivors report self-medicating to cope with past trauma and were trafficked as a direct result of their addiction](#), while those who have survived a trafficking experience [often begin using substances in an attempt to cope with what has happened or is currently happening to them](#). Decreasing the risk of incarceration while at the same time increasing safe usage and support lessens the likelihood of re-exploitation for trafficking survivors who use drugs because they are less likely to have to rely on a potential trafficker for this essential assistance, or to live their lives in the shadows where exploitation thrives as they merely try to figure out how to use more safely.

Harm reduction measures like Senate Bill 327 are important for all people who use drugs, including survivors of trafficking. Equipping people to use drugs more safely works not only to stem the spread of infectious disease, but also to lift the stigma that so often isolates drug users, making them vulnerable to a whole host of other harms, including human trafficking. **For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports Senate Bill 327 and respectfully urges a favorable report.**

[The Human Trafficking Prevention Project](#) is dedicated to ending the criminalization of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking through access to civil legal services and support for policies that dismantle harmful systems and increase access to basic human rights and legal relief.

*For more information, please contact:
Jessica Emerson, LMSW, Esq.
Director, Human Trafficking Prevention Project
(E): jemerson@htprevention.org*

2026 - Para Decrim_SB327 - written.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessie Dunleavy

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Senate Bill 327 – SUPPORT

Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I am a lifelong Marylander and am in strong support of repealing the prohibition of paraphernalia and eliminating the penalties that are counter to our commitment to prioritize health and safety throughout our communities. The current practice of paraphernalia prohibition not only over-utilizes law enforcement for nonviolent offenses, but it hurts those at risk, creating barriers to needed resources and undermining their capacity to take care of themselves.

My passion for promoting health care over punishment, and my insight into the suffering and neglected needs of people with a substance use disorder, stems from the path I walked with my son who died of a mixed drug overdose in 2017. I loved and admired my son, and I know his death was preventable.

Struggling with disabilities all of his life, my son was socially awkward and insecure about his future. Sadly, in his twenties, he discovered that drugs eased his pain. It is nothing short of heartbreaking to know that most people who fall into chaotic drug use are doing just that—escaping pain, be it poverty or some other misfortune. In our case, getting needed help was impossible. In fact, he was mistreated and shamed at every turn. Health care was out of the question. Kindness was seen as coddling.

Thankfully, recent years have brought progress. There is greater awareness that health-centered policies save lives and that punitive measures have failed to reduce the harms of drug use. We know too that criminalizing possession of paraphernalia—as with all drug-related arrests—disproportionately targets marginalized communities. We must recognize that our practice of disempowering the vulnerable, removing resources from them, and isolating them has failed.

Here in Maryland, we have shifted on some measures. Naloxone, for example, has gained acceptance and has proven to reduce overdose. We also know that syringe programs are highly successful in saving lives, promoting voluntary treatment, and reducing disease transmission. Yet a person who seeks his own safety by obtaining a clean needle (a sign that he cares about his own health) is subject to arrest, with current policies causing confusion for police and penalizing people based on circumstances beyond their control.

Recovery from addiction is possible, but the most effective programs are underutilized due to fear of arrest on the part of those in need, and stigma on the part of lawmakers. Literally every major health organization in the world urges low barrier access to all initiatives that prioritize safe drug use—with access to clean supplies as a primary. Yet Maryland, year after year, despite its overdose and HIV rates, continues to allow roadblocks to these life-saving programs, proven effective regardless of whether the benefit is measured in humanitarian or economic terms.

I urge you to support this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Dunleavy
49 Murray Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21401
jessie@jessiedunleavy.com
www.jessiedunleavy.com

Health Care for the Homeless - SB 327 FAV - Repeal

Uploaded by: Joanna Diamond

Position: FAV



HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
FAVORABLE

**SB 327 – Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions –
Repeal**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 5, 2026

Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports SB 327, which would repeal Maryland’s paraphernalia and controlled paraphernalia laws. This bill would importantly mean: there would be no State penalties for paraphernalia; no one would be legally stopped, arrested, or charged based on paraphernalia alone; and items that are obtained legally would remain legal. This bill will save lives, reduce barriers to housing and employment, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Ending all paraphernalia penalties is a proven, cost-free way to improve health and public safety statewide.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center serving over 11,000 of Maryland’s most vulnerable individuals each year, we see firsthand the effects of criminalizing substance use, particularly on communities of color. The criminalization of substance use and paraphernalia perpetuates homelessness and prevents individuals from seeking supportive services. When there is less fear of punishment or arrest by police, individuals feel safer accessing treatment.¹ By decriminalizing paraphernalia and implementing harm reduction principles, individuals are more inclined to carry and use life-saving supplies—such as sterile needles and safer smoking kits—that prevent overdose deaths and the spread of infectious diseases.² The continued toll of opioid overdose deaths and related harms both warrants and necessitates decriminalization of paraphernalia. In addition to saving lives, this has enormous implications for lowering healthcare costs related to treating infectious diseases, like HIV.³

Maryland is falling behind other states. 20 states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use. Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia.⁴ Maryland’s paraphernalia laws are outdated, cruel, and ineffective. This bill rightly recognizes that Maryland’s paraphernalia law incentivizes unsafe behaviors that harm people who use drugs, first responders, business owners, families, and neighborhoods. As a health provider that sees how crucial and life-saving harm reduction and decriminalization are for the clients we serve, **Health Care for the Homeless strongly urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 327.**

¹ Laura Vearrier, *The Value of Harm Reduction for Injection Drug Use: A Clinical and Public Health Ethics Analysis*, Disease-a-Month 65, no. 5 (May 2019), pp. 119–41, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.disamonth.2018.12.002>.

² See U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, *Effectiveness of Syringe Service Programs, 2023*, available at <https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/syringeservice.cfm>.

³ David Wilson, et al., *The cost-effectiveness of harm reduction*, International Journal of Drug Policy 26, supp. 1 (February 2015), pp. S5-S11, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2014.11.007>.

⁴ Public Health Law Network, *Harm Reduction Legal Project* (2025).

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

*Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.
Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.*

For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.

February 3, 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Jordan Williams

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I, Jordan Williams I, of Baltimore City Public Schools strongly supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

As a public school teacher and a Maryland resident for over 10 years, I am writing in support of this bill because of what I see—not in theory, but in real life, in my community, and around my students.

Over the years, I have come across used syringes discarded on sidewalks, near school grounds, and in public spaces where children walk every day. These are not abstract public health concerns—they are immediate safety issues for students, families, and educators who are simply trying to move through their neighborhoods without fear of accidental exposure or injury.

Current paraphernalia laws unintentionally make our public spaces less safe. When people who use drugs or have substance use disorders are forced to choose between carrying used supplies and risking arrest, or discarding them immediately in public spaces, the law pushes people toward the option that creates more harm for everyone. The safest choice—proper disposal—should not also be the most legally risky. As a teacher, my priority is the well-being of my students. As a Maryland resident and parent, family member, and neighbor, I want cleaner, safer public areas where children can walk, play, and learn without encountering hazardous waste. Laws that discourage safe disposal do the opposite of what they are intended to do. This bill makes sense because it prioritizes public health, community safety, and harm reduction in a practical, evidence-based way. It supports safer behavior, reduces the presence of dangerous materials in shared spaces, and helps create the healthy environments our youth deserve. We all want Maryland communities that are safe, compassionate, and forward-thinking. Updating our laws to reflect these values is an important step in protecting our students and strengthening our neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time and for considering this legislation.

I, Jordan Williams, of Baltimore City Public Schools believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Jordan Williams @ jwilljsa@gmail.com

Sincerely,
Jordan Williams
Public School Teacher & Maryland Resident

testimony SB 327 MDDCSAM FAV paraphernalia.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph Adams, MD

Position: FAV



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

SB 327 **SUPPORT** Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions– Repeal
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. February 5,2026

The state of Maryland distributes drug paraphernalia (syringes & other supplies) as a key component of Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) **which reduce overdose deaths**, lead to treatment referrals, along with other benefits. Maryland administers, regulates, and supports 22 active SSPs across most Maryland subdivisions.

Ironically, many Marylanders are arrested and charged for possession of the same paraphernalia they received from the state. (Individuals are only protected from arrest if they can prove they obtained these materials from an SSP; which they are typically unable to do).

There is a plethora of publications in the peer-reviewed medical literature demonstrating the effectiveness of decriminalization of paraphernalia and calling for wider adoption. These include articles that studied increased litter, crime, or drug initiation. I have been unable to find any peer-reviewed publications to the contrary.

Decriminalizing drug paraphernalia was identified as one of the "priorities for action" for addressing the overdose crisis according to a 2023 report in The Milbank Quarterly. **(1)**
Many non-academic organizations are also calling for paraphernalia decrim. **(2)**

Maryland law allows for the “sale of needles and syringes or other paraphernalia” by pharmacies without a prescription to patients “showing proper identification and indication of need.” (Md. Code Regs. 10.13.08.01) **It is not appropriate to allow their legal sale, but not their legal possession.**

Respectfully,

Joseph Adams, MD, FASAM, addiction & internal medicine; Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee, MDDCSAM

REFERENCES

(1) Cerda M, et al. The Future of the United States Overdose Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities Milbank Q. 2023 Feb 22;101(Suppl 1):478-506.

(2) AMERSA "supports the decriminalization of drug and paraphernalia possession for personal use for all currently illicit drugs and all associated equipment." (2025) AMERSA is a non-profit professional organization, founded in 1976, whose mission is to improve health and well-being through interdisciplinary leadership in substance use education, research, clinical care and policy. As reported in Hill K, et al. In Support of the Decriminalization of Personal Drug and Paraphernalia Use and Possession: Position Statement of AMERSA, Inc (Association for Multidisciplinary Education, Research, Substance Use and Addiction) Subst Use Addctn J. 2025 Jan;46(1):4-12

DPA Support Letter MD SB 327 Decrim Paraphernalia

Uploaded by: Kellen Russoniello

Position: FAV



February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal) - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

The Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) strongly supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will repeal drug paraphernalia law and end penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

DPA is the leading organization in the U.S. working to address the harms of drug use and drug criminalization through policy solutions, organizing, and public education. We advocate for a holistic approach to drugs that prioritizes health, social supports, and community wellbeing. DPA opposes punitive approaches that destabilize people, block access to care, and drain communities of resources. We believe that the regulation of drugs should be grounded in evidence, health, equity, and human rights. In collaboration with other movements, we change laws, advance justice, and save lives.

History has shown that harsh penalties for drug paraphernalia do nothing to help people and only worsen tragic outcomes. The criminalization of drug paraphernalia increases the risks of overdose and preventable diseases like HIV and hepatitis, particularly impacting low-income people and communities of color.¹ The current drug paraphernalia laws also threaten to punish people who provide harm reduction services.

This bill would remove penalties for possessing and providing supplies that reduce the health and safety risks of drug use, allowing people to provide and access syringe service programs without fear of arrest.² This will improve public health and safety by ensuring people have access to resources that reduce their risk of overdose and infectious disease and increase their connections to substance use disorder treatment and other health services.

Ending penalties for drug paraphernalia would make Maryland's existing programs more effective. Current paraphernalia laws criminalize everyday items that are otherwise legal, such as syringes, spoons, scales, and small plastic bags. Under existing law, these items become illegal when they are associated with drugs, even when no drugs are present. Nineteen other states have removed all criminal penalties for the possession of syringes and needles.³ By maintaining these penalties, Maryland is falling behind other states and evidence-based public health practices.

¹ Davis, Corey S., Derek H. Carr, and Elizabeth A. Samuels. 2019. "Paraphernalia Laws, Criminalizing Possession and Distribution of Items Used to Consume Illicit Drugs, and Injection-Related Harm." *American Journal of Public Health* 109 (11): 1564–67. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2019.305268>.

² Jones, Christopher M. 2019. "Syringe Services Programs: An Examination of Legal, Policy, and Funding Barriers in the Midst of the Evolving Opioid Crisis in the U.S." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 70 (August): 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.04.006>.

³ Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association. 2025. "Drug Checking Equipment, Needles/Syringes, and Drug Paraphernalia: Summary of State Laws." <https://legislativeanalysis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Drug-Checking-Equipment-50-State-Summary.pdf>.

We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.

For more information about this position, please contact Kellen Russoniello at krussoniello@drugpolicy.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kellen Russoniello".

Kellen Russoniello
Director of Public Health
Drug Policy Alliance
krussoniello@drugpolicy.org
(510) 679-2311

SB327

Uploaded by: Lauren Taylor

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

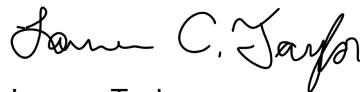
- **Nursing Students for Harm Reduction, a group of 126 current nursing students at Johns Hopkins University, strongly supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia.** This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Nursing Students for Harm Reduction was founded over 10 years ago to help prevent fatal overdoses, combat stigma, and prepare nurses to deliver compassionate, excellent care to people who use drugs. Despite important progress in reducing fatal overdoses, far too many people are still getting sick and dying from complications of drug use. I currently work in an ICU and just the other day was caring for someone fighting an infection of their brain and spine tissue after sharing syringes. The criminalization of safer use supplies causes harm and gets in the way of common-sense public health efforts to reduce illness, pain and death. It also disproportionately harms people of color who are more likely to be stopped and searched.

We believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Lauren Taylor at ltayl103@jh.edu or laurenctaylor@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Lauren Taylor
President
Nursing Students for Harm Reduction
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
Baltimore, MD

SB327_Testimony_L.Love.pdf

Uploaded by: Lukah Love

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

My name is Lukah Love and I am a resident of Maryland's 45th Legislative District. I'm writing to express my emphatic support for Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

As a third-generation Marylander, I have been proud of the care and support our state has provided many of our most at-risk neighbors and communities. I have worked in harm reduction for over 5 years and in community organizing for over 15, and I know how truly valuable this state support is.

Ending penalties for paraphernalia will improve the health and safety of our communities. As a harm reductionist, I look forward to the passage of this bill increasing engagement and trust among the people my organization serves. As a person who has lost a number of loved ones to overdose, I appreciate the way this bill will help reduce stigma and encourage people to feel safer engaging with overdose prevention resources.

I believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, feel free to contact me at lukahlove@gmail.com. Thank you for your care and attention to this crucial bill.

Sincerely,

Lukah Love
Baltimore City
MD District 45

SB0327 MRybak.pdf

Uploaded by: Margaret Rybak

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

As an expert in the field of community based drug checking, I strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

I am proud to have worked in Baltimore City for the past 4 years, managing Maryland's Rapid Analysis of Drugs (RAD) Program. I write to you today as a person who has expertise in drug checking, not as someone representing the views of the Maryland Department of Health.

Maryland's overdose rates continue to decline, in large part due to the overdose prevention and harm reduction efforts widely supported at all levels of Maryland government. SB327 is a critical next step to continuing to strengthen this work. SB327 will prevent infectious disease and overdose. Studies have shown that paraphernalia criminalization is counterproductive to public health due to the increased fear of arrest - dampening syringe exchange engagement and access to care. SB327 will improve access to care for many Marylanders who use drugs - saving Maryland healthcare costs of delays in care and missed preventative care.

Drug checking, both community and law enforcement based, is one of the best tools we have to be responsive to an ever changing drug market. The near real-time data collected through Maryland's RAD program is essential in targeting overdose prevention work to people at the highest risk of overdose and adapt to drug trends. Currently, RAD only operates in Syringe Services Programs (SSP), due to the legal protections needed for participants to bring in used equipment. With SB327, drug checking can expand to all jurisdictions in Maryland and sampling would increase beyond only Marylanders who engage with an SSP. This additional data would better inform overdose response strategy, saving money preventing Marylanders from overdose.

I believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact me at 216-905-6920 or hellomaggierybak@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Maggie Rybak
Drug Checking Expert and Maryland Employee

SB 327_Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Contr

Uploaded by: Marvin "DOC" Cheatham

Position: FAV

CORY V. MCCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City



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Budget and Taxation Committee

Capital Budget Subcommittee

Health and Human Services Subcommittee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes on Senate Bill 327

Bill Title: Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Hearing Date: February 5th, 2026

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 327. **SB 327** is a common-sense public health and public safety bill that updates Maryland's paraphernalia law without weakening drug enforcement.

Right now, legally obtained household items; like spoons, scales, or small plastic bags; can be treated as criminal paraphernalia based on suspicion alone, even when no drugs are present. This bill brings clarity and fairness by ensuring legal items remain legal.

SB 327 will also reduce syringe litter and improve safety in our communities. When people are not afraid of arrest, they are more likely to carry used syringes and dispose of them properly. That means safer sidewalks, playgrounds, and neighborhoods. The CDC supports policies like this to reduce syringe litter and related risks.

In addition, this bill strengthens Maryland's overdose prevention efforts at no cost to the State. Ending paraphernalia penalties increases participation in syringe service programs, which reduce overdoses, prevent HIV and hepatitis C, and save taxpayer dollars. It also allows the Department of Health's Rapid Analysis of Drugs program to expand statewide, giving every county better data on the illicit drug supply. At a time of a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall, this is a practical and cost-effective solution.

Finally, SB 327 does not legalize drugs or weaken law enforcement. Drug possession, sale, and manufacturing remain illegal, and states with similar laws continue strong enforcement efforts.

For these reasons, **SB 327** is a balanced and responsible approach, and I respectfully ask for a **favorable report**.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cory V. McCray'.

Cory V. McCray
45th District

Test Favor to SB327 paraphernalia 020326.pdf

Uploaded by: Melinda Littell

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of SB327

Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal

FAVORABLE

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chairman; Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair; and esteemed members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to ask you to vote in favor of SB327. This bill repeals Maryland's paraphernalia and controlled paraphernalia laws, removing penalties for paraphernalia and thereby ending law enforcement actions based on drug paraphernalia alone.

SB327 is a common-sense bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders. Paraphernalia laws criminalize legal, everyday objects, such as small plastic bags, spoons, and scales. Syringes are used for a multitude of legal purposes and can be purchased legally at a pharmacy without a prescription. Under current law, these items become illegal when associated with suspected drugs, even if no drugs are present. Legal items should remain legal.

Evidence shows decriminalization will enhance public safety while strengthening Maryland's overdose prevention efforts. It would promote the safe disposal of syringes, [reducing litter](#) and enhancing safety in public spaces. Removing the fear of arrest for paraphernalia [would reduce risky behavior](#) among drug users, such as sharing syringes and needles, and would reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. And according to a review conducted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, syringe access programs [do not increase drug use or injection frequency, while reducing HIV transmission and risky injection behaviors](#).

Twenty states have already decriminalized syringe possession for personal use. Now Maryland needs to do the same: treat addiction and substance abuse as public health issues rather than criminal matters, and repeal penalties for paraphernalia. For these reasons, I urge the Committee to vote favorably on SB327.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melinda Littell

Arnold, D33C

NPHL.FAV.SB327.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Abrams

Position: FAV

Network for Public Health Law: FAVORABLE on SB 327

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 5, 2023

The Network for Public Health Law supports SB 327. As a non-profit, non-partisan national public health law organization, we have expertise in the policy interventions proven to reduce the harms of drug use. Criminalization of drug paraphernalia is one of the primary legal barriers to an evidence-based, public health approach to drug policy. Maryland is currently a nationwide outlier on this issue. Passage of SB 327 would place it among the growing number of leader states that no longer impose criminal penalties on individuals who possess syringes and other safer drug use supplies.

Access to safer drug use supplies saves lives. It prevents disease transmission and corresponds with more positive treatment outcomes, reduced overdose rates, and healthier communities. When drug use equipment is criminalized, people in need are discouraged from coming forward to participate in treatment and community resources. Repeal of these criminal barriers helps provide that life-saving access.¹

Marylanders across political affiliations believe that drug use should be treated primarily as a public health issue.² Yet **Maryland is an outlier for its especially harsh criminal approach** to syringe possession and distribution. We recently published a peer-reviewed paper in which we researched the legality of paraphernalia-related criminalization, which revealed that on some metrics Maryland's paraphernalia laws were among the harshest in the country.³

By granting legal access to safer drug use supplies, Maryland would follow the successful approach of a states like Minnesota, Maine, and Massachusetts.⁴ It would join the 21 states that already allow possession of syringes for personal use and the 19 that allow their free distribution; the 15 states that already allow possession of smoking equipment for personal use and the 14 that allow its free distribution; and the 10 states that already permit all of the above (AK, ME, MA, MI, MN, NY, OR, VT, WA, and WV).⁵

Despite the claims that opponents may make, **the evidence shows that increased access to safe supplies does NOT increase drug use.**⁶ People with legal access to safer equipment are less likely to overdose or contract bloodborne diseases like HIV and more likely to enter treatment.⁷ Repealing the criminal prohibition on such supplies is not about taking a softer approach on crime, it's about taking a stronger public health approach on overdose and disease transmission, which is what the evidence supports and the public prefers.

For these reasons, **the Network for Public Health Law urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 327.**



The Network for Public Health Law provides legal information and technical assistance on issues related to public health. The Network addresses the legal and policy barriers that impede the establishment and expansion of evidence-based harm reduction measures such as naloxone distribution, syringe access programs, and access to evidence-based substance use disorder treatment. For more information, please contact harmreduction@networkforphl.org.

¹ See generally Corey Davis et al., *Legal Barriers to Safer Smoking Supplies Cause Harm and Should Be Removed*, 103 *Milbank Quarterly* 381 (2025); Corey Davis & Derek Carr, *Repealing State Drug-Paraphernalia Laws*, 387 *New England J. Med.* 1344 (2022); Corey Davis et al., *Paraphernalia Laws, Criminalizing Possession and Distribution of Items Used to Consume Illicit Drugs, and Injection-Related Harm*, 109 *Am. J. Pub. Health* 1564 (2019).

² See Legal Action Ctr., *New Polling Shows Public Support for Health-First Approach to Substance Use* (2024), <https://www.lac.org/assets/files/natl-polling-factsheet-messaging-and-tables.pdf>; Bully Pulpit Interactive, *Overwhelming Majority Say War on Drugs Has Failed, Support New Approach* (June 9, 2021), https://assets.aclu.org/live/uploads/document/BPI-ACLU_WoD_Public_Release_Memo_060221_Updated060821_FINAL.pdf.

³ Corey Davis et al., *A Comprehensive Review of State Laws that Govern the Distribution and Possession of Drug Use Equipment in the United States*, 149 *Int'l J. Drug Pol'y* 105152 (Mar. 2026), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0955395926000046>.

⁴ Corey Davis, Network for Pub. Health L.: Insights, *Repeal of Paraphernalia Laws: Minnesota Leads the Way* (Dec. 13, 2023), <https://www.networkforphl.org/news-insights/repeal-of-paraphernalia-laws-minnesota-leads-the-way>; see also Anne Siegler & Ari Edelman McHenry, *Evidence-Based Approaches to Drug Policy: A Roadmap for Minnesota*, at 94 (Feb. 2025), <https://www.lrl.mn.gov/docs/2025/mandated/250612.pdf> (finding, in mandatory report to state legislature, that post-decriminalization in Minnesota “[k]ey informants noticed the impact of the policy change in their communities as participants at harm reduction organizations were more likely to safely dispose of used drug use equipment”).

⁵ *Supra* note 3, at 3, 6 (these counts include consideration of D.C.).

⁶ Katherine M. Mackey et al., Dep’t of Veterans Affairs, Health Servs. & Res. Dev’t Serv., *Effectiveness of Syringe Services Programs: A Systemic Review*, at vi, 10–14, 22 (Dec. 2023), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK598962/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK598962.pdf (finding, in comprehensive literature review of four decades of research, that increased access to syringes via syringe services programs “does not appear to increase injection frequency . . . , result in an increase in unsafe syringe disposal practices, or directly increase neighborhood crime rates”).

⁷ *Id.* at v, 9, 14–17, 21–22 (finding in same comprehensive literature review that increased access to syringes “prevent[s] HIV transmission” and “HCV transmission,” “reduced injection risk behavior,” and “increased treatment linkage and/or use of treatment services”).

Hilliard MD SB 327 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Hilliard

Position: FAV



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ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Transitions Coordinator
Minnesota, USA

Chief Thomas Thompson (Ret.)
Ohio, USA

Date: February 5, 2026

Re: SB 327 - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Position: SUPPORT

To: Maryland Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Hilliard, and I served for 27 years with the Baltimore Police, and am currently a speaker for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership. Thank you for the opportunity to express my strong support for SB 327. This legislation would end all penalties for what is considered “drug paraphernalia,” improving public health and safety across Maryland.

LEAP is an international nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

Maryland’s current paraphernalia laws criminalize everyday, otherwise legal objects such as spoons, small plastic bags, and scales. These items only become illegal when they are associated with suspected drugs, even if no drugs are present. Senate Bill 327 would repeal these outdated rulings, and allow legally obtained items to be truly legal.

Throughout my nearly three decades in law enforcement, I worked in patrol, narcotics, internal affairs, youth programs, and later as a Major overseeing 911 operations. I saw firsthand how heavily criminalizing substance use, rather than treating it as a public health issue, does nothing to actually reduce drug abuse. Instead, it pushes individuals into the criminal justice system, where their lives are further destabilized.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

[Current laws fail as a deterrent for drug use and instead discourage individuals from accessing harm reduction tools](#) that prevent overdose and disease transmission. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), access to sterile supplies [reduces HIV transmission by nearly 50%](#) and significantly decreases cases of hepatitis C. Yet fear of arrest often prevents people from carrying or using these life-saving tools. SB 327 will remove this unnecessary legal barrier, ensuring that people can carry clean paraphernalia, and access harm reduction resources without the threat of criminalization.

Paraphernalia laws also divert police resources from real public safety threats. [Arrests for personal-use paraphernalia do not disrupt drug markets or reduce violent crime.](#) Focusing on low-level offenses, such as paraphernalia possession, consumes officer time and taxpayer dollars without yielding significant public safety benefits. Removing penalties for legally obtained objects that are deemed drug paraphernalia, would allow law enforcement to concentrate on more pressing issues.

I believe that this bill would simplify Maryland's criminal law and improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response. I urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my law enforcement perspective in support of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Major Mike Hilliard (Ret.)
Baltimore Police Department, Maryland
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership

SB 327 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Lent

Position: FAV

February 05, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I, Michael Lent, strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Access to sterile paraphernalia does not increase crime or drug use. Ending the penalties can allow for safe and effective syringe access. A U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs review found that syringe access programs do not increase drug use or injection frequency, while reducing HIV transmission and risky injection behaviors ([link to the review](#))

I believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

Sincerely,

Michael Lent
Parkville, MD 21234

OOOMD-2026-PARA-SB 327- FAV (Written).pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Livshin

Position: FAV



ON OUR OWN
OF MARYLAND

onourownmd.org

7310 Esquire Court
Mailbox 14
Elkridge, MD 21075

410.540.9020

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 327: Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Thank you Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and committee members for your commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for Marylanders, especially community members who experience significant behavioral health challenges. On Our Own of Maryland (OOOMD) is a nonprofit behavioral health education and advocacy organization, operating for 30+ years by and for people with lived experience of mental health and substance use recovery. Our network of affiliated peer-run Wellness & Recovery Centers throughout the state offer free, voluntary recovery support services to 10,000 community members with mental health and substance use disorders.

OOOMD is in strong support of SB 327, which would repeal Maryland's drug paraphernalia law and end penalties for possession and distribution of paraphernalia. This will effectively decriminalize personal harm reduction practices (i.e. using sanitary supplies), which reduce the occurrence and transmission of infectious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

Since 2016, established Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) and their participants have been made exempt from the criminal offense of the possession of specific drug paraphernalia.¹ However, harm reduction program workers, family members, loved ones, and peers all put themselves at significant risk of being arrested when delivering or utilizing different types of supplies to help reduce health risks. Repealing Maryland's drug paraphernalia law would eliminate this barrier to live-saving care.

Public health research has shown SSPs to be effective in preventing the spread of infectious disease and increasing access to treatment² without increasing rates of drug use³ and other criminalized activity.⁴ In fact, 2025 CDC research shows that SSP participants are 5x more likely to enter treatment and 3x more likely to stop using drugs.⁵ There are 29 currently active SSPs across 20 counties in Maryland.⁶

¹ Public Health – Opioid-Associated Disease Prevention and Outreach Program (2016). SB0097 (CH0348)

² Fernandes RM, Cary M, Duarte G, et al. Effectiveness of needle and syringe programmes in people who inject drugs – An overview of systematic reviews. BMC Public Health. 2017;17(1):309. doi:10.1186/s12889-017-4210-2.

³ P. Lurie, A.L. Reingold, B. Bowser (eds). The Public Health Impact of Needle Exchange Programs in the United States and Abroad: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations (1993)

⁴ Murphy, S., Kelley, M. S., & Lune, H. (2004). The health benefits of secondary syringe exchange. Journal of Drug Issues, 34(2), 245-268.

⁵ CDC, Syringe Service Programs (SSPs), 2025. Available at <https://restoredcdc.org/www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>

⁶ <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/Pages/Syringe-Services-Program.aspx>



On Our Own of Maryland - 2026 - SB 327 - FAV (Drug Paraphernalia - Repeal)

The threat of law enforcement involvement and/or incarceration based on paraphernalia laws creates fear and stigma that deters community members from engaging with these low/no barrier healthcare programs. Our network of peer-run Wellness & Recovery Centers serves people with significant substance use, mental health and co-occurring health challenges across Maryland, including in Washington County, Frederick County, Carroll County, Harford County, and Baltimore City. We've heard from individuals who will not participate in Baltimore City Needle Exchange Program due to the very real fear of being arrested and forced through the traumatizing experience of detoxing in jail instead of in a treatment setting.

Across the US, 20 states have already taken steps toward decriminalization of personal harm reduction supplies (i.e. possession of syringes for personal use). Eliminating penalties for paraphernalia in Maryland is essential to expanding harm reduction programs and practices that help keep our communities safer and healthier. **SB 327 is life-saving legislation and we urge a favorable report.** Thank you!

NCADD-MD - 2026 SB 327 FAV - Paraphernalia Decrimi

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FAV



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 5, 2026

**Senate Bill 327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled
Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal
Support**

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 327. Harm reduction strategies do not encourage drug use. There is decades of research and experience right here in Maryland that prove that thinking is simply wrong.

This bill keeps legal items that are legally purchased, thereby removing another reason for people to avoid seeking help. As Maryland continues to consider and implement programs and strategies that reduce the harms caused by substance use, the repealing the prohibition of paraphernalia will continue to help ensure that people are accessing services such as syringe services programs and avoid arrest and incarceration.

The benefits to this bill include:

- Improved treatment outcomes when someone with a substance use disorder is ready to enter treatment;
- Greater incentive to seek treatment as people who are using substances are less afraid of law enforcement interaction;
- A reduction in the racial disparities in the criminal justice system, as Maryland is among the worst states in its proportion of people of color who are incarcerated;
- A reduction in the collateral damage caused by incarceration; and
- Improvement in the impact of limited public health resources.

Passing this bill will reduce the need for people to re-use certain items that may contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases. This will have a positive public health impact on the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, and save money in the reduction of needed health services.

We know the collateral damage caused by the war on drugs continues to harm people in Maryland, and disproportionately people of color. As this committee has heard repeatedly over the years, people with criminal records are too often denied employment, housing, food stamps, and scholarships, without any due consideration of the details involved in the records.

For all of these reasons, we urge this Committee give a favorable report to SB 327.

SENATE BILL 0327 - written testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Luce

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I am a public health professional and direct service provider to your constituents. **I strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia.** This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

As a syringe service programming provider to people who use drugs and their loved ones in Baltimore, I have candid conversations about the realities of drug use and paraphernalia criminalization daily. The fear of stigma, profiling, and arrest that could be devastating to someone and their families. **Fear of arrest is a major barrier to Syringe Service Programs (SSP) which connect people to sterile supplies, healthcare, recovery, and social services.** Many participants I see are people picking up supplies for someone in their lives that may be even more vulnerable for various reasons, subjecting multiple people to unnecessary fear.

SSP participants are 5x more likely to enter treatment and 3x more likely to stop using drugs. **Current law prevents your constituents from confidently accessing life-saving resources** – from health care, to social services, to a simple, but criminalized, tool that prevents the spread of infectious disease. Fear of arrest leads people to share syringes rather than carry sterile supplies; disease transmission is caused by shared paraphernalia, not by drug use itself. **It is necessary to repeal this law so your constituents are empowered to create a life they want to live, without fear.**

Maryland is usually a state that prioritizes social welfare, but we are falling behind other states in this arena. 20 states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use. Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia. **Every major scientific and medical body to study syringe access has found it reduces the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne diseases.** Criminalization incentivizes risky behavior and continues the spread of disease.

I know this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve Maryland's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about my position, please contact me at rachelmluce@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Rachel Luce (Baltimore City, MD)

SB327_CCCC Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ro Johnson

Position: FAV



February 5, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Bill 327 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia
Prohibitions - Repeal
FAVORABLE

Charm City Care Connection supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal). SB327 will repeal the drug paraphernalia statute from Maryland law, ending penalties, eliminating confusion and reducing risk for people accessing life-saving services through Syringe Service Programs (SSPs). This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Founded in 2009, Charm City Care Connection (CCCC) is a community-based harm reduction drop-in center in East Baltimore. As a state authorized SSP and Overdose Response Program (ORP), we are on the front line of defense in providing support against overdose for the people most at risk in Baltimore City. We connect with people who are often disconnected from traditional healthcare systems, with a primary focus on serving individuals who use drugs. We build ongoing relationships with our clients in a way that allows us to provide supportive counseling, referrals, and linkage to care. Our mission is to serve as a pathway to healthcare, low-barrier drug treatment, and other wrap-around services while upholding the dignity, respect, and agency of our clients.

As an authorized SSP, we are legally allowed to distribute sterile drug use supplies to our clients. The distribution of these items is an evidence-based practice proven to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Unfortunately, the confusing nature of current paraphernalia laws in Maryland prevents these health benefits from fully materializing. Unless you can prove you are a client of an authorized program, you are subject to arrest for possessing the same items given out for free by the 29 existing SSPs across the state of Maryland.

Proving you are an SSP client requires holding onto a paper identification card, similar to a business card, and advocating for yourself to law enforcement while displaying this card. For our clients, many of whom are unstably housed and have a history of incarceration, this process is challenging and traumatizing at best. As providers, all we can do is educate our clients on the law and the options they have to protect themselves, but cannot promise them it will be honored.

Our inability to ensure the safety of our clients from arrest for the service we are legally providing them is demoralizing. By repealing the paraphernalia statute from Maryland code, we can eliminate fear of arrest as a barrier to accessing and using our services and improve the ability of our providers to make a positive impact in our clients' lives. **For these reasons and more, we ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB327 a favorable report.**

For more information about Charm City Care Connection or this position, please contact Owen O'Keefe at ookeefe@charmcityclinic.org.

SB 327 Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Ruth Carlock

Position: FAV



Date: February 3, 2026

Hearing Date: February 5, 2026

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 327 Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal)

Position: In Support and Request Favorable Report

Submitted by:

Ruth Carlock

Brain Injury Association of Maryland

2200 Kernan Dr.

Baltimore MD 21207

Our organization:

The Brain Injury Association of Maryland (BIAMD) is a 42-year-old organization providing education, advocacy, and research. We operate an information & assistance hotline, work with over 100 clients in case management, host a yearly conference on brain injury, and advocate for policies that improve the life of Marylander's living with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI). We are writing in SUPPORT of this bill.

Rationale:

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members, my name is Ruth Carlock, the Legislative Liaison at the Brain Injury Association of Maryland and am here in support of SB 327. Brain Injuries, including those resulting from overdoses, represent a significant public health concern. Substance use disorders can lead to overdoses that deprive the brain of oxygen resulting in lasting cognitive, physical, and emotional impairments. Research highlights the correlation between substance abuse, overdose incidents, and the risk of acquiring traumatic, anoxic, and hypoxic brain injuries.

The connection between substance misuse and brain injury is strong. A notable proportion of individuals in acute rehabilitation for brain injury are due to drug or alcohol

use. Researchers in Canada found that individuals who had experienced an overdose were over 15 times more likely to suffer a brain injury compared to those who had not, noting the correlation between these two issues.

In 2023, Governor Moore created the Office of Overdose Response to tackle the overdose crises. This legislation would strengthen those commitments making Maryland a safer place for first responders and healthcare professionals, while continuing this administration's push of treating addiction and substance use disorders as the public health crises they are, instead of a criminal justice issue that perpetuates the issue. To quote Governor Moore, "We are focused on expanding pathways to compassionate care for individuals, whether they are actively using drugs or are on the road to recovery. Building communities that can thrive requires ensuring that all Marylanders, regardless of where they come from or where they are, can access the support they need."

This Bill would eliminate the criminalization of several of the most important harm reduction techniques utilized in the reduction of overdoses. From the testing equipment of drugs like fentanyl or common syringes used in weekly medications. Syringe Service Programs reduce needle litter, keep public spaces cleaner, and reduce the spread of STDs. These programs are also more effective in states without the criminalization of drug paraphernalia leading to higher engagement in recovery treatment.

SB 327 addresses a critical component of brain injury prevention for individuals with substance use disorders. We urge the committee to render a favorable report and thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

References:

- 1. Public Health Law Network, Harm Reduction Legal Project (2025)**
- 2. Tookes, Hansel E et al. "A comparison of syringe disposal practices among injection drug users in a city with versus a city without needle and syringe programs." *Drug and alcohol dependence* vol. 123,1-3 (2012): 255-9. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2011.12.001**
- 3. CDC, *Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)*, 2025. Available at <https://restoredcdc.org/www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>**
- 4. Davis, Corey S et al. "Paraphernalia Laws, Criminalizing Possession and Distribution of Items Used to Consume Illicit Drugs, and Injection-Related Harm." *American journal of public health* vol. 109,11 (2019): 1564-1567. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.305268**
- 5. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, *Effectiveness of Syringe Service Programs*, 2023. Available at <https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/syringeservice.cfm>**
- 6. Marx, M A et al. "Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program." *American journal of public health* vol. 90,12 (2000): 1933-6. doi:10.2105/ajph.90.12.1933**

7. Governor Moore signs executive Order creating Maryland's Office of Overdose Response - Press releases - News - Office of Governor Wes Moore.

(n.d.). <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/governor-moore-signs-executive-order-creating-maryland%e2%80%99s-office-of-overdose-response.aspx>

Candy SBPara.pdf

Uploaded by: Samantha Kerr

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

My name is Samantha Kerr, a resident of District 46 and I strongly supports Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will end all penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

Ending paraphernalia penalties is common sense and overdue.

- Paraphernalia law criminalizes otherwise legal, everyday objects - small plastic bags, spoons, and scales. Syringes can be purchased legally at a pharmacy without a prescription. These become illegal when associated with suspected drugs, even if no drugs are present. Legal items should remain legal.
- Maryland is falling behind other states. 20 states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use. Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia. Maryland's paraphernalia laws are outdated.

I believe that this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **We ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact darci@baltimoreharmreduction.org

Sincerely,

Samantha Kerr
Baltimore City District 46

MASDP Testimony_SB027_Paraphernalia Repeal_FAVORAB

Uploaded by: Thomas Higdon

Position: FAV



Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy

LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Chair Smith,
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB327, Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal (FAVORABLE)

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in **strong support of SB327** on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy, a state-wide member-based advocacy group lead by people with lived or living experience with substance use.

Lived experience shows paraphernalia prohibitions cause harm

For many Marylanders, paraphernalia prohibitions mean they reuse, share, or throw supplies away in unsafe places. The results are predictable: more infections, more injuries, more fear of seeking help, and more harms that spill into the community. We asked our members to share their personal experiences and a few themes emerged:

- **Criminalization pushes people to reuse or share supplies even when they know the risks.**

"During COVID it felt seemingly impossible to find clean syringes/supplies. Because I was in the thick of my addiction, I was going to use substances, regardless of the supplies that were available. The only option on one particular evening, was to use a dull needle that belonged to someone that was diagnosed with Hep-C. I knew that this person Hep-C, and I knew that this needle was dull, and yet I put it into my body regardless. I still have permanent nerve damage to this day because of that experience, due to digging around in my arm with a dull needle."

– Person in recovery and Overdose Prevention Coordinator in Montgomery County.

- **Paraphernalia stigma does not stay neatly confined to drug use.**

"The police were rude, they did not even treat me as a human. I am diabetic and at that time I was using insulin with syringes. I have never been an IV drug user, so the thought of being interrogated about them was never on my mind. I felt humiliated."

– Person in Recovery and Certified Community Health Worker in Talbot County

MASDP Testimony_SB027_Paraphernalia Repeal_FAVORAB

Uploaded by: Thomas Higdon

Position: FAV



Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy

LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Chair Smith,
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB327, Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions – Repeal (FAVORABLE)

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in **strong support of SB327** on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy, a state-wide member-based advocacy group lead by people with lived or living experience with substance use.

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- **Criminalization pushes people to reuse or share supplies even when they know the risks.**

"During COVID it felt seemingly impossible to find clean syringes/supplies. Because I was in the thick of my addiction, I was going to use substances, regardless of the supplies that were available. The only option on one particular evening, was to use a dull needle that belonged to someone that was diagnosed with Hep-C. I knew that this person Hep-C, and I knew that this needle was dull, and yet I put it into my body regardless. I still have permanent nerve damage to this day because of that experience, due to digging around in my arm with a dull needle."

– Person in recovery and Overdose Prevention Coordinator in Montgomery County.

- **Paraphernalia stigma does not stay neatly confined to drug use.**

"The police were rude, they did not even treat me as a human. I am diabetic and at that time I was using insulin with syringes. I have never been an IV drug user, so the thought of being interrogated about them was never on my mind. I felt humiliated."

– Person in Recovery and Certified Community Health Worker in Talbot County

- **People avoid health care and treatment when carrying supplies feels legally risky.**

“I desperately needed medical attention, but I did not want to go to a clinic because I was afraid of getting caught with my paraphernalia; even if it meant that I was going to receive help for my condition.”

– Person in Recovery and Behavioral Health Service Specialist in Baltimore City

- **People dispose of supplies unsafely when they think they might be searched.**

“I was always afraid about being stopped with paraphernalia on me. I would toss it at the first hint of trouble, often in parks or alleys, even along the sidewalk, where anyone – including children – could have found it. I still think about that possibility years later.”

– Person in recovery living in Baltimore County

This is what SB0327 can change. Not by pretending drug use is risk-free. But by removing a criminal penalty that reliably makes drug use more dangerous for the individuals and the public.

The research aligns with our lived experience

The lived experience of our members aligns with research, which shows that criminalizing paraphernalia creates a predictable chain reaction: people avoid carrying sterile supplies because they’re afraid of being arrested, which makes reuse and sharing more likely and increases the risk of HIV and hepatitis transmission.ⁱ Those same legal barriers can also make syringe services programs less effective.ⁱⁱ Repealing paraphernalia prohibitions helps reverse those harms by making it safer and simpler for people to carry and obtain personal-use supplies and for programs to distribute them without legal gray areas.ⁱⁱⁱ

For these reasons, the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE report on SB0327**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Higdon
Executive Director
Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Access to clean syringes. Health Impact in 5 Years (HI-5). Retrieved February 3, 2026, available at https://archive.cdc.gov/www_cdc_gov/policy/hi5/cleansyringes/index.html; Davis, C. S., Carr, D. H., & Samuels, E. A. (2019). Paraphernalia laws, criminalizing possession and distribution of items used to consume illicit drugs, and injection-related harm. *American Journal of Public Health*, 109(11), 1564–1567, available at <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305268>.

ⁱⁱ CDC (n.d.) supra; Fernández-Viña, M. H., Prood, N. E., Herpolsheimer, A., Waimberg, J., & Burris, S. (2020). State laws governing syringe services programs and participant syringe possession, 2014–2019. *Public Health Reports*, 135(1_suppl), 128S–137S, available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033354920921817>

ⁱⁱⁱ Davis, et al. (2019), supra; Fernández-Viña, et al. (2020), supra.

SB 327_ FAV_ ACLU MD.pdf

Uploaded by: Tierra Bradford

Position: FAV

SB327 Testimony T. Scott.pdf

Uploaded by: Tiffinee Scott

Position: FAV

Date: February 3, 2026

Written Testimony
In Support of Senate Bill 327
Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions –
Repeal

Submitted by:
Tiffinee Scott
Parent and Advocate
Baltimore, Maryland

Before the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Tiffinee Scott, and I am a parent and community advocate from Baltimore City. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 327, which seeks to repeal criminal penalties for drug and controlled paraphernalia.

Through my experience witnessing the fear and uncertainty within individuals, families, and communities, I have seen firsthand that criminalization does not protect people. Instead, it pushes them away from essential help. Criminalizing paraphernalia does not stop drug use; rather, it forces individuals to use alone, share supplies, and avoid carrying safer-use materials to evade arrest. These conditions increase the risk of overdose, the spread of infectious diseases, and delays in obtaining ongoing support.

Furthermore, paraphernalia arrests place a heavy burden on families and communities. Families absorb the consequences of these arrests through lost income, court involvement, housing instability, and long-term barriers to employment. These laws perpetuate cycles of justice involvement that fail to support stability or recovery.

Access to harm reduction services keeps people alive and creates pathways to care. Repealing these prohibitions will allow individuals to engage with services without fear and enable outreach workers to perform their lifesaving work more effectively. Survival is the first step toward recovery.

Senate Bill 327 is a necessary step toward addressing public health by shifting our response from punishment to care. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 327.

Thank you,

Tiffinee Scott
Parent and Advocate

SB 327 - SWASC - Decrim - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: UM SWASC

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 327

Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 5, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change supports SB 327, which would eliminate criminal penalties for the possession of paraphernalia used in the consumption of illicit substances. SWASC strongly urges a favorable report on SB 327 as it is a crucial step to shift Maryland's approach to substance use toward public health.

Harm reduction strategies save lives, and criminalizing paraphernalia undermines these successes. Programs that provide safe syringes have been shown to reduce the transmission of these diseases drastically.¹ These health benefits can only be fully realized if individuals trust that they will not be penalized for seeking out and possessing safer supplies. Syringes can be purchased legally at a pharmacy without a prescription; however, these *become* illegal when associated with suspected drugs, even if no drugs are present. Legal items should remain legal. Decriminalizing paraphernalia would allow individuals to focus on their health and safety rather than worrying about criminal charges for possessing everyday objects.

SB 327 benefits not only the people who use paraphernalia to consume drugs, but also the communities in which they live. Many people who use drugs may avoid keeping used syringes or other paraphernalia due to fear that law enforcement will use those items as evidence of drug use, leading to potential arrest.² This fear can lead to improper disposal, which increases public health risks and environmental hazards. Decriminalizing paraphernalia possession ensures individuals have the time and space to safely dispose of used supplies. Fewer improperly discarded syringes ultimately can mean safer sidewalks, parks, and public spaces for families and businesses across Maryland.

Fully eliminating criminal penalties for paraphernalia is a critical step in challenging the stigma that surrounds substance use. By clarifying that the possession of harm reduction supplies is not a crime, this bill helps to shift the narrative around drug use – from one of criminality and punishment to one of care and support. This is not just a public health benefit: it is a social justice issue. Decriminalizing paraphernalia will help to ensure that people who use drugs are treated with dignity and respect, rather than being further marginalized by a legal system that punishes them for trying to survive.

Maryland is falling behind other states by continuing to criminalize paraphernalia. Maryland's laws are harmful and outdated, as 20 other states have decriminalized syringe possession for personal use.³ Criminalizing paraphernalia incentivizes unsafe behaviors



For more information, please contact

KB Blalock

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that harm people who use drugs, first responders, business owners, families, and neighborhoods. Ending all paraphernalia penalties is a proven, cost-free way to improve health and public safety statewide.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on SB 327.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ CDC, *Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)*, 2025. Available at <https://restoredcdc.org/www.cdc.gov/syringe-services-programs/php/index.html>

² Tookes, Hansel E et al. "A comparison of syringe disposal practices among injection drug users in a city with versus a city without needle and syringe programs." *Drug and alcohol dependence* vol. 123,1-3 (2012): 255-9. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2011.12.001

³ Public Health Law Network, Harm Reduction Legal Project (2025).

<https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/topics/projects/harm-reduction-legal-project/>

Zoe Renfro LOS SB0237 2026-02-03_signed.pdf

Uploaded by: Zoe Renfro

Position: FAV

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of Senate Bill 327
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

As an individual resident of Baltimore City, I strongly support Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) which will repeal drug paraphernalia law and end penalties for drug paraphernalia. This is a common-sense, evidence-based bill that prioritizes the health and safety of all Marylanders.

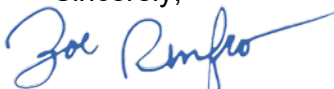
I lost someone I loved to an overdose in 2016, and I have been driven to work in harm reduction ever since. I've been proud to call Baltimore City home for the past decade, and I've had the privilege of working in public health in Maryland for five years.

SB 327 will prevent needless overdose death and infectious disease. Studies show paraphernalia criminalization is counterproductive to public health; it exacerbates fear of arrest, inhibits syringe services participation, increases infectious disease risk, and increases fatal overdose risk. SB 327 will improve linkage to care and quality of life for Marylanders. This bill will cost nothing to implement and will save Maryland millions by keeping our loved ones alive and preventing costly illness.

I believe this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's infectious disease and overdose prevention response, and keep legally obtained items legal. **I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 327 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position, please contact Zoe Renfro at zoe.renfro@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Zoe Renfro, MPH
Resident of Baltimore City, Maryland

SB327.pdf

Uploaded by: Carl Latkin

Position: FWA

February 3, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Chairman
Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 327 (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

I am a professor and public health researcher at Johns Hopkins University, but this testimony is my individual perspective and does not represent my institution. I strongly support Senate Bill 327.

For over two decades, I have been working on programs that train people who use drugs to be peer educators to help prevent HIV and hepatitis C transmission, endocarditis, as well as drug overdoses in our communities. Many of our Maryland communities have been hit hard by these epidemics, causing terrible losses and pain to many families.

In our health programs, we train individuals not only to promote risk reduction among their network members and the community, but also to reduce the risk of community members encountering used syringes. We encourage participants not only to dispose of their own syringes and other drug paraphernalia but also to safely dispose of syringes that they find in the community. Unfortunately, this effort has been hampered by the ambiguity of current laws, which make some people afraid to possess used syringes.

Moreover, the current law can impede researchers and harm reduction professionals from collecting drug use paraphernalia to test for the presence of highly dangerous adulterants in the drug supply. This information can be life-saving.

I believe this bill will simplify Maryland's criminal law, improve our state's response to infectious diseases and overdose prevention, and keep legally obtained materials legal. I urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee support Senate Bill 327.

For more information about my position, please contact me at clatkin2000@gmail.com

Sincerely,



Carl Latkin, PhD
Professor, Department of Health, Behavior and Society
Department of Epidemiology
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

SB 327 - unfavorable - para.pdf

Uploaded by: Marot Williamson

Position: UNF

Ivan Bates
President



Kirsten N. Brown
Coordinator

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
kbrown@mdsaa.org ~ 301-748-1312

Date: February 3, 2026

Bill Number: SB 327

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association (MSAA) opposes Senate Bill 327 and urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.

SB 327 would completely decriminalize drug paraphernalia used to consume, store, weigh, measure, prepare, manufacture, and increase the volume via cutting agents of controlled dangerous substances. Devices used to ingest drugs, whether by injection or inhaling, would be legal to possess, leaving law enforcement with limited options to address public drug use and restricting their ability to intervene and connect those struggling with addiction to treatment. Items used to distribute and manufacture controlled dangerous substances would be legal to possess, hindering the ability of law enforcement to investigate possession with the intent to distribute controlled dangerous substances and would decriminalize items used by drug dealers to sell their poison.

While the MSAA was in favor of harmonizing the penalties for drug paraphernalia in the last legislative session and focusing on helping those with substance abuse issues to find treatment options as opposed to imposing punitive sanctions, SB 327 sends an unfortunate and dangerous message about drug paraphernalia, one that will leave our communities less safe in the midst of an opioid crisis. This bill would not lead to harm reduction, it would be harmful.

MSAA urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.