



HB551

Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia

Prohibitions – Repeal

February 6, 2026

Position: Favorable

Esteemed Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and House Judiciary Committee Members,
Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition strongly supports HB551, 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. HB551 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 Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia. Maryland's paraphernalia laws are outdated.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 House Judicial Proceedings Committee give House Bill 551 a favorable report.**