

February 6, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Chairwoman, House Judiciary Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 100
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT of House Bill 551
(Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal) -
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a public health professional and direct service provider to your constituents. **I strongly support House Bill 551 (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 Minnesota has fully repealed paraphernalia penalties, and Alaska has never criminalized paraphernalia.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 entity 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)