

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,

As an expert in the field of community based drug checking, I strongly supports 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.

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. HB551 is a critical next step to continuing to strengthen this work. HB551 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. HB551 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 HB551, 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 House Judiciary Committee give HB551 a favorable report.**

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

Sincerely,

Margaret Rybak

Maggie Rybak
Drug Checking Expert and Maryland Employee