



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lieutenant Diane Goldstein, Ret.
Nevada, USA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deputy Chief Wayne Harris, Ret.
Chair, New York, USA

Matthew Simon
Secretary, New Hampshire, USA

Trevor Velinor
Commissioner, Ret.
Treasurer, St. Croix, USVI

Chief Mike Butler, Ret.
Colorado, USA

Chief Brendan Cox
New York, USA

Lt. Sarko Gergerian
Massachusetts, USA

Captain Michael Harvey, Ret.
Virginia, USA

Judge Arthur L Hunter, Jr., Fmr.
Louisiana, USA

Ms. Nadine Jones
New Jersey, USA

Investigator Corinne N. Mason
New Jersey, USA

Professor Kendra McSweeney
Ohio, USA

Deputy Supt Cheryl Morris, Ret.
New York, USA

Thomas Schoolcraft
Transitions Coordinator
Minnesota, USA

Chief Thomas Thompson (Ret.)
Ohio, USA

Date: February 6, 2026

Re: HB 551- Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal

Position: SUPPORT

To: Maryland House Judiciary 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 HB 551. 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. House Bill 551 would repeal these outdated rulings, and allow legally obtained items to be truly legal.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. HB 551 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 House Judiciary Committee to give House Bill 551 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