



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,

BRIDGES Coalition for Overdose Prevention Sites **fervently supports HB551- 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 HB551.

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 House Bill 551 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
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