



February 5, 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

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

I am writing on behalf of Impact MN, a state-wide, cross-sector coalition promoting health-based approaches to drug use in Minnesota.

In 2023, Minnesota became the first state in the country to remove most penalties associated with drug paraphernalia possession. Lawmakers recognized that this was a practical, evidence-based policy change that would strengthen both public health and public safety by reducing overdose risks, preventing disease, and lessening litter and other community impacts.

Experience has shown that harsh penalties for drug use and paraphernalia do not help people and only worsen the tragic overdose crisis. Tougher laws push people toward unsafe practices and illicit markets, resulting in preventable disease and overdose. These increased risks are particularly prevalent among low-income communities and communities of color. These penalties also threaten health professionals' ability to provide legitimate public health and community safety efforts.

In Minnesota, those lessons hold true. Since the policy change took effect, the results have been encouraging. Communities report cleaner public spaces as people safely dispose of items without fear of arrest. Service providers have reached more racially and geographically diverse populations by offering safer materials for use and disposal. Participants in syringe service programs — where updated paraphernalia laws improved engagement — are five times more likely to enter treatment and three times more likely to stop using drugs than those without access to such services.

While long-term outcomes are still emerging, the impact is already clear: removing penalties for paraphernalia possession helps shift the response to substance use from punishment toward practical solutions that save lives, reduce disease, and promote recovery.



Therefore, Impact MN is strongly in support of [HB551](#) / [SB327](#) (Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal). **We ask that the House Judiciary Committee give HB551 a favorable report.**

For more information about this position and Minnesota's experience, please contact Ari McHenry at ari@impactmn.org

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arielle McHenry, MPH

Coalition Administrator, Impact MN