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Date: February 6, 2026

Bill Number: HB 551

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association (MSAA) opposes House Bill 551 and urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.

HB 551 would completely decriminalize drug paraphernalia used to consume, store, weigh, measure, prepare, manufacture, and increase the volume via cutting agents of controlled dangerous substances. Devices used to ingest drugs, whether by injection or inhaling, would be legal to possess, leaving law enforcement with limited options to address public drug use and restricting their ability to intervene and connect those struggling with addiction to treatment. Items used to distribute and manufacture controlled dangerous substances would be legal to possess, hindering the ability of law enforcement to investigate possession with the intent to distribute controlled dangerous substances and would decriminalize items used by drug dealers to sell their poison.

While the MSAA was in favor of harmonizing the penalties for drug paraphernalia in the last legislative session and focusing on helping those with substance abuse issues to find treatment options as opposed to imposing punitive sanctions, HB 551 sends an unfortunate and dangerous message about drug paraphernalia, one that will leave our communities less safe in the midst of an opioid crisis. This bill would not lead to harm reduction, it would be harmful.

MSAA urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.