



House Judiciary Committee
February 10, 2026
House Bill 551 - Criminal Law - Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled
Paraphernalia Prohibitions - Repeal
Support

NCADD-Maryland supports House Bill 551. Harm reduction strategies do not encourage drug use. There is decades of research and experience right here in Maryland that prove that thinking is simply wrong.

This bill keeps legal items that are legally purchased, thereby removing another reason for people to avoid seeking help. As Maryland continues to consider and implement programs and strategies that reduce the harms caused by substance use, the repealing the prohibition of paraphernalia will continue to help ensure that people are accessing services such as syringe services programs and avoid arrest and incarceration.

The benefits to this bill include:

- Improved treatment outcomes when someone with a substance use disorder is ready to enter treatment;
- Greater incentive to seek treatment as people who are using substances are less afraid of law enforcement interaction;
- A reduction in the racial disparities in the criminal justice system, as Maryland is among the worst states in its proportion of people of color who are incarcerated;
- A reduction in the collateral damage caused by incarceration; and
- Improvement in the impact of limited public health resources.

Passing this bill will reduce the need for people to re-use certain items that may contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases. This will have a positive public health impact on the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, and save money in the reduction of needed health services.

We know the collateral damage caused by the war on drugs continues to harm people in Maryland, and disproportionately people of color. As this committee has heard repeatedly over the years, people with criminal records are too often denied employment, housing, food stamps, and scholarships, without any due consideration of the details involved in the records.

For all of these reasons, we urge this Committee give a favorable report to HB 551.