

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
Members, House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Sheila Ruth

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: February 28, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 927 – *Criminal Law – Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance – De Minimis Quantity*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports with amendment** House Bill 927.

House Bill 927, as introduced, would have established that the use or possession of a de minimis quantity of a specified controlled dangerous substance (CDS) is a civil offense as opposed to the current status as a criminal offense. Decriminalization of the use or possession of small quantities of a CDS is one potential harm reduction measure that would assist the State in addressing drug use as a public health crisis rather than a criminal issue and also reduce the number of persons who are convicted of low-level, non-violent drug offenses that saddle people with criminal records for life, preventing them from obtaining housing and employment. While MedChi believes that decriminalization of the use or possession of small quantities of a CDS has great promise as a tool to more effectively address drug use, it must be done in a deliberative manner with careful consideration of the framework in which the goals of the effort can be achieved without unintended consequences. To that end, MedChi supports the amendments offered by the sponsor to create a Task Force to comprehensively consider the issue and make recommendations regarding the best path forward to achieving the noted objectives. With the noted amendments, MedChi requests a favorable report.