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House Judiciary Committee
February 10, 2026
House Bill 551 – *Criminal Law – Drug Paraphernalia and Controlled Paraphernalia
Prohibitions – Repeal*
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 551.

House Bill 551 would decriminalize possession of items that can be used to inject, ingest, inhale, or otherwise consume a controlled dangerous substance. Reducing the harm caused by substance use has been a longstanding priority of MedChi. The decriminalization of paraphernalia proposed by this legislation strengthens the State’s harm reduction approach to help ensure that people are accessing services, such as syringe service programs, and will avoid unnecessary arrest and incarceration. Decriminalization will provide a greater incentive to seek treatment, as people who are using substances will be less fearful of potential law enforcement interaction. In decriminalizing paraphernalia, the State will also reduce the need for people to reuse 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. Further, the collateral damage of unnecessary incarceration continues to harm people in Maryland, and disproportionately people of color. Passage of House Bill 551 will demonstrate a commitment to reframing substance use as a public health issue, not a criminal issue. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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