



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

P.O. Box 6988 Largo, MD 20792
www.ProgressiveMaryland.org
Contact@ProgressiveMaryland.org
Facebook.com/ProgressiveMaryland
@Progressive_MD

Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill SB0784:

Criminal Law - Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis Quantity

TO: Senator William C. Smith, Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: David Shrank, Member of Progressive Maryland
DATE: March 8, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB0784. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong SUPPORT for this bill.

As a volunteer with Progressive Maryland's Drug and Alcohol Policy Task force, it's my privilege to discuss the importance of the above bill. The war on drugs and caused immense unnecessary taxpayer dollar expenditure on incarcerating people who have been traumatized and re-traumatized by the system as well as those looking for emotional and physical pain relief as a result of other types of traumas in life. For many without health insurance, illicit drugs become the easiest and most effective way to treat physical and emotional pain. This is where psycho-education of drugs and alcohol is needed as well as drug and alcohol treatment for those needing further assistance which will have dramatically higher success than simply arresting someone and releasing him/her to the same lifestyle.

As someone who has personally worked deep in drug and alcohol counseling, jail/prison diversion, and having managed several programs (Trenton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC), I've witnessed countless times where an individual is trying to get help for addiction and seeking effective services to turn one's life around, only to be arrested and pulled into jail, preventing treatment from occurring. We have all learned by now that there is almost nothing "correctional" in the correctional system. The correctional system causes people to revert back to a child-like state and reverses the help the person may have been receiving from effective service provision in the community. Effective drug and alcohol counseling along with psychoeducation can lead to incredible differences in the productivity of people's lives.



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Therefore, less tax payer dollars are spent on criminal justice because people make far less bad decisions.

This bill is incredibly important and should be passed. I also would like to point out that drug treatment programs like what is provided by Empowerment Behavioral Therapeutic Services is an incredibly effective follow-up to ensure people get the treatment needed to be successful in their current and future endeavors in life. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

We urge a FAVORABLE report on **SB0784**.

Best Regards,

David Shrank, MSW, LCSW-C, LICSW

Progressive Maryland Drug and Alcohol Policy Task Force Leader

Founder and CEO

Empowerment Behavioral Therapeutic Services

www.EBTServices.com

David.shrank@EBTServices.com