



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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**Testimony on Maryland House Bill 927:
Criminal Law - Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis
Quantity**

TO: Del. Clippinger, Chair, Del Moon, Vice Chair, and members of the House
Judiciary Committee
FROM: Yves Brady, Drug Policy Task Force Chair, Progressive Maryland
DATE: 24 February 2023
POSITION: Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 927. 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.

Decriminalization is a major step toward reducing the health and social problems drugs cause in our communities. Folks who are struggling with drugs are often afraid to reach out for the help they need because they fear being arrested. Personally speaking, I know several people who have stopped themselves from seeking help because they are terrified of going to prison.

Decriminalization is also a step toward ending another injustice in our society-- the mass incarceration of people of color. As you are aware, criminal penalties for possession of small quantities of drugs are not applied evenly across races and communities, resulting in disproportionate numbers of Marylanders of color being locked up. While incarcerated, folks can lose their jobs and homes and are unable to care for their families.

As a person who has friends and family members who have been direct targets of the War on Drugs, I'm well aware that incarceration does not solve the issue of drug use disorder. The justice system is supposed to make our society better and statistically speaking, that isn't the case with heavy penalties on substance possession.

Enacting HB 927 would be the first step in ending decades of terror and misinformation. Our residents deserve real support, but jail time. I urge a **favorable report on HB 927**.