



Communities United
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HB927 - Favorable Witness Testimony
Criminal Law - Use or Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance - De Minimis Quantity
House Judiciary Committee

Greetings Judiciary Committee Chair, Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair David Moon and other members,

I am writing on behalf of Communities United, a small nonprofit grassroots organization in Baltimore City, to ask for a favorable report on House Bill 927.

Communities United works in and with low- to moderate-income communities to raise community leaders into civic engagement. Many of our members live in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Baltimore City, where violence, drug use, over-policing and under-police-service form the background of their lifetimes' experiences. Most of our members are Black and have lived under the shadow of presumed guilt for their entire lives.

HB 927 is a step toward treating them, their families, loved ones and communities with dignity and respect. Addiction is a public health crisis, not a crime. HB 927 provides law enforcement the authority to direct people who use drugs or struggle with substance use disorders treatment, not criminalization. It's time to stop the disproportionate punishment of low-income, low-level drug users and address the root causes of poverty, crime and violence. It is a public health issue, not a criminal one.

[Research has shown](#) that arrest and incarceration do not act as a deterrence or reduce drug use. We need to stop pretending we don't know that.

HB927 is one small but important step forward in treating substance use as a health issue and minimizing the harm caused by contact with the criminal justice system.

That is why Communities United stands in favor of HB 927. Please deliver a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Jess Ahart
Executive Director
Communities United