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**TO:** The Honorable Chair and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

**FROM:** Tamika Gauvin, Executive Director of Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

**RE:** House Bill 822 – Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council – Alterations

**DATE:** February 25, 2020

**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

Chair McIntosh, Vice-Chair Jackson, and members of the Committee, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice **supports** House Bill 822.

House Bill 822 requires the Governor to include \$10,000,000 in the annual State budget to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund; allows hospital-based violence intervention programs that provide intensive counseling, case management and social services to individuals who are recovering from injuries resulting from violence to be eligible for VIPP funding; and requires independent, third-party evaluators to assess the efficacy of each evidence-based health programs or evidence-informed health program that receives funding under this subtitle.

In Baltimore, we all too often hear about innocent bystanders who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. There is a shooting and a stray bullet injures or cuts down the life of someone who has no relation to the conflict. One can imagine the fear, the anger, the sadness, and the memories of an incident that could possibly haunt a person recovering from injuries related to such violence. This victim is probably easy to imagine because we can put ourselves in the shoes of an innocent bystander.

There is another type of victim. One that would be harder for us to associate. We often hear that the gun violence in Baltimore is generally about "beefs," those conflicts between individuals that are the preludes to gunfire. It also often about retaliation. You shot at me or you shot my boy, now I am going to shoot you. You have stolen my drugs and I can't let you get away with that. This person could also end up in a hospital being treated for injuries. We should recognize that behind these beefs or conflicts there are people who are likely hurt

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and traumatized from a lifetime of horrible experiences—physical abuse, sexual abuse, continuous exposure to violence, extreme poverty and hunger, and no support system. We should also recognize that there is an opportunity to intervene and potentially stop a cycle of violence that results from retaliation.

Programs such as Safe Streets, in the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and Roca understand these things and have made hospital response an integral part of their work. The cycle must be broken and getting in contact with a victim as soon as possible to provide support and alternatives is key.

I also want to highlight that there are different reasons for gun violence that do not have to do with the violence that is prevalent in Baltimore. I acknowledge these victims and their need for services and supports. Gun violence, whatever the origin has become far too common in our society. While it is right to focus on perpetrators, the fact that this bill focuses on the victim and supports with funding the programs that provide services and supports to victims is commendable.

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice requests a **favorable** report on HB 822.