

Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 25, 2020

Re: Support for – HB945 – Criminal Procedure – Sentencing and Disposition – Community Impact Statement

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Upper Fells Point Improvement Association, we are writing to express our support for House Bill 945: Criminal Procedure – Sentencing and Disposition – Community Impact Statement, which would authorize a representative of a community impacted by a crime of which a defendant, or respondent in juvenile court, has been convicted to submit a certain community impact statement during sentencing or disposition of criminal or juvenile cases. This bill would also require a court to consider certain community impact statements.

The effects of crime on a community are numerous and can cripple the growth and development of a neighborhood. Some of these adverse effects on the community can include decreased property values, reduced safety, departure of existing businesses, and avoidance of new businesses. Additionally, increased crime has been shown to have a dramatic effect on social fabric, or the interpersonal relations between members of a community, because crime creates fear. The more that people are aware of crime, the more they tend to fear becoming victims of crime.

Community impact statements recognize that the effects of crime can be far-reaching. Sometimes the victim of a crime is more than one person – it is a community. The purpose of a community impact statement is to allow the community the opportunity to explain to the Court and the offender how the crime has affected the community. With few exceptions, crime is going to have an unequivocally negative effect on a community and its members; bringing people together and taking action against crime is necessary for restoring our communities after a crime has occurred.

To begin the restoration of our community, we need legislation that gives a voice to our community in the courtroom. For this reason, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 945.

Sincerely,

Matthew Barnes

Upper Fells Point Improvement Association Safety Chairman