

2024 GBCC SB 774 Entertainment District Grants SUP

Uploaded by: Ashlie Bagwell

Position: FAV



Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

SB 774—Public Safety—Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program

February 21, 2024

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 550 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on SB 774— Public Safety—Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program.

SB 774 establishes the Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant program to assist community organizations, nonprofit groups and local governments in funding security operations during times of high pedestrian traffic in qualifying entertainment districts. Crime has been an issue in Montgomery County and across the State, impacting retail businesses, restaurants and the residents who patron them. We support SB 774 for the reason we support SB 100—Criminal Law—Organized Retail Theft: it offers another way to help to reduce crime and ensure safety for Maryland’s businesses and the patrons they serve.

For these reasons, we would respectfully request a favorable vote on SB 774. And we thank Senator President Ferguson for his leadership on this important issue.

MML-SB 774 - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Jorch

Position: FAV



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 21, 2024

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 774 - Public Safety - Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program

Position: Favorable

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports Senate Bill 774, which will assist municipal governments more effectively address security concerns in certain areas that tend to have high call volumes of complaints.

The bill creates a program designed to assist local governments, among other partners, meet security needs in entertainment districts as defined in the bill. Certain areas of a city that have establishments serving alcohol and hosting live music often bring large numbers of people together, in many cases on foot. The program's grant funding to increase security features in these areas that often produce higher call volumes of complaints is enticing as a way to bolster public safety.

Municipalities are often the economic and cultural hubs of their regions and as a result, there are clusters of establishments serving alcohol or host live music. While the eligibility criteria for grants is not yet cemented, based on the broad parameters it appears that many municipal governments could qualify. Public safety resources are already stretched thin and this new program could provide needed additional funding for specific areas.

The provisions of SB 744 should assist municipal governments curb nuisance behavior through safety improvements made possible by grants funded through this program. For this reason, the League respectfully requests that the committee provide Senate Bill 744 with a favorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Letter of Support SB774.pdf

Uploaded by: Brant Fisher

Position: FAV

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brant Fisher, and I am here today to express my support for Senate Bill 774.

For the past 17 years, my family and I have resided in Southeast Baltimore. Over the last seven years, I have served as the President of the Brewers Hill Neighbors Association, and for the past four years, I have been the President of the Baltimore Police Department Community Relations Council, where I coordinate public safety efforts across Southeast Baltimore.

Our community is home to an entertainment district situated within a residential area. This district boasts several businesses that cater to residents and visitors alike, offering drinks, entertainment, and special events. Located just blocks away from the harbor waterfront, our community attracts visitors from the city, state, and beyond.

During special events, ensuring public safety becomes a top priority, as the population swells with attendees. Surrounding communities have diligently pursued grant funding to enhance safety measures, including security cameras, traffic calming measures, and café lighting, which have significantly improved safety in and around our entertainment district.

Despite our volunteer efforts, additional assistance is needed. I believe that SB 774 will help establish a connection between unique entertainment districts like ours in Canton and much-needed resources. By supporting this legislation, you will help communities such as ours better ensure the safety of residents, business owners, employees, and visitors who come to our city for sports activities, concerts, festivals, and tourism.

For these reasons and more, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 774.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brant Fisher

Support SB 774.pdf

Uploaded by: Erin Murphy

Position: FAV



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Richard J. Worley
Police Commissioner

February 21, 2023

TO: The Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Erin Murphy, Esq., Director of Government Affairs, Baltimore Police Department

RE: Senate Bill 774- Public Safety- Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program

DATE: February 21, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee: Please be advised that the Baltimore City Police Department supports Senate Bill 774. This legislation aims to establish a security grant fund for areas with high concentration of establishments licensed to sell alcohol with on site consumption, establishments licensed to have on site entertainment, that also encounter high pedestrian traffic and high calls for service and crime.

The need for this bill often presents itself in the news media. In the past few weeks, there have been acts of violence in multiple well known “entertainment areas” in Baltimore City. The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is supportive and open to any measure that provides extra assistance in patrol, emergency response, and efforts to keep Baltimoreans and visitors safe. SB774 seeks to establish a program for funding that allows community associations, non-profit organizations, and local government to apply for security assistance in eligible areas. Eligibility is determined by the density establishments licensed for the sale of alcohol and entertainment that also consistently have high calls for service or crime.

The Baltimore Police Department requests a favorable report for SB 774.

SB0774-JPR_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

Senate Bill 774

Public Safety – Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 21, 2024

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 774. This bill would fund heightened security needs in areas where there is a high density of bars, entertainment, and foot traffic. The funding is intended to be provided through the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victims Services to local governments, non-profits, and community organizations.

Vibrant downtown main streets, special event areas, and arts districts are all ways local governments attract businesses, residents, and tourists to popular locations. These areas are often complemented with bars, restaurants, live entertainment, and a high density of visitors, which naturally demand an added layer of security. This bill recognizes the efforts local governments must make in bringing these districts to life for community members and tourists by helping to make sure patrons can enjoy the activities with a sense of safety and security.

Counties believe this is a thoughtful approach to making sure residents can enjoy events and activities in a safe and responsible manner and help drive areas of heightened economic vitality. For this reason, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 774.

SB 774 - Entertainment District Security Grant JPR

Uploaded by: Senate President Bill Ferguson

Position: FAV



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

SB 774 - Public Safety - Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program

Testimony of Senate President Bill Ferguson

On February 21, 2024

Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Why This Bill Matters:

Maryland has a number of entertainment districts where there is a high concentration of live entertainment and alcoholic beverage licensed establishments in a small geographic area. These entertainment districts, including Frederick, Ellicott City, Fells Point, and Hampden, provide an immense economic benefit to the State in terms of driving tourism, small business growth, neighborhood resilience, and tax revenue.

At the same time, these areas draw a disproportionate amount of local law enforcement resources away from surrounding communities at peak hours of operation. Although our law enforcement officers do their best to serve both these entertainment districts and surrounding neighborhoods, that can sometimes prove impossible when limited resources and personnel cannot be in multiple places at once.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck in my legislative district last year, when off-duty Howard County Sheriff Deputy Ryan Demby was killed while out in Federal Hill, one of the most vibrant entertainment districts in Baltimore City. This horrific incident demonstrates the need for additional security in areas where liquor can contribute to a situation needlessly escalating, thereby putting uninvolved bystanders at risk.

What This Bill Does:

Senate Bill 774 creates a Maryland Entertainment District Security Grant Program to be administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (soon-to-be the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention). Designated entertainment districts throughout the State would be designated based on a high density of bars or live entertainment venues within a ½ square mile area.

Community organizations, nonprofit entities, and local governments could apply for funding from this grant program to assist with increasing security operations at peak hours when there is a high level of pedestrian traffic and calls for service. Additional criteria and the application process for funding would be determined by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services.

Given the State's budgetary constraints, Senate Bill 774 permits an appropriation into this special fund of up to \$1 million per year beginning in Fiscal Year 2026.

Why You Should Vote For This Bill:

Entertainment districts like Bourbon Street in New Orleans provide a model for enhancing public safety in these unique areas while ensuring coverage in surrounding communities. Our entertainment districts throughout the State are invaluable to local economies, but we cannot allow for disputes to spiral into tragedy as alcohol combined with a proliferation of guns leads to arguments turning deadly.

This proposal is community-driven based on feedback with surrounding neighborhood leaders following the horrific killing of Deputy Demby. While it will benefit neighborhoods in the 46th Legislative District, its applicability touches many of our communities from the Ocean City to Frederick.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 774 and I urge the committee to move this bill with a favorable report.