

**HB 583 Center for Firearm Violence Prevention — Establishment**  
**Favorable Testimony of National Coalition of 100 Black Women Prince George's County**

February 1st, 2024

Good Afternoon, Chairman, Vice Chair, and members of the Judiciary Committee: I am pleased to present House Bill 583 Center for Firearm Violence Prevention — Establishment. This bill would address Maryland's high levels of firearm violence affecting communities with primarily people of color. HB 583 combats gun violence by establishing the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention in the Maryland Department of Health and partnering with local governments and community-based gun violence intervention programs.

Firearm violence in Maryland remains alarmingly high. According to the CDC, Maryland firearm injury death rate is 15.2 per 100,000, totaling 915 deaths in 2021. Of these victims, an average of 67 children and teens die every year as a result of firearm violence (Everytown). Firearm deaths are preventable. We must create evidence-based policies and programs that protect Marylanders against gun violence and save lives by collaborating with local government, advocacy groups, and medical professionals. Through this means, the work will be done in consultation with the governor's office or any relevant agency, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to reducing firearm violence.

On May 1, 2025, the Center will submit a preliminary state plan for a public health approach to reducing firearm violence to guide the work of the center to the governor and the general assembly. On May 1, 2029, and every 4 years thereafter, the Center will submit a state strategic plan for firearm violence reduction using public health strategies to the governor and the general assembly. The bill would take effect on October 1, 2024. For funding, the Center may apply for, receive, and spend federal grants-in-aid or any other federal funds made available to the department for use in carrying out the powers and duties of the secretary or the department.

Our neighboring states have already taken the initiative to prevent gun violence. In New Jersey, the Attorney General announced a first in the nation office dedicated to bringing civil enforcement actions against firearm companies to hold them accountable for violations of the law that harm the health and safety of New Jersey residents. In September 2022, through an administrative directive the Attorney General created a new division within the department called the Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance. This was a unified strategy for public safety that brought together services for victims. In the state of New York, the Red Flag Law, also known as the extreme risk protection order law, protects individuals who show signs of being a threat to themselves or others from purchasing or possessing any kind of firearm.

Establishing the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention is a preemptive way to address firearm violence within our state. Implementing a public health approach to firearm violence reduction brings together the community, professionals, and lawmakers and saves lives. By implementing a public health approach with the joint support of the community, professionals, and lawmakers we will reduce firearm violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 583, and I respectfully request your support.