



RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT NOTE

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
MARYLAND ▪ GENERAL ▪ ASSEMBLY

2026 Session
HB0605

Public Safety - Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program - Establishment

Bill Summary

This bill establishes the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program within the Victim Services Unit (VSU) of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) to assist in the relocation of victims of gun violence in the State to ensure the safety and well-being of victims and victims' families. The bill also establishes a dedicated fund to provide compensation grants for relocation assistance for victims of firearm violence.

Racial Equity Impact Statement

State agency data indicate that Black individuals experience significant disproportionate harm from firearm-related violence and have the highest rates of firearm-related injury or death. Data also show that Black and Hispanic Marylanders are more likely to be victims of gun violence compared to white Marylanders. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) reports that Black individuals account for the largest share of new claims related to gun violence and homicide cases. The relocation program and the dedicated special fund in the bill may strengthen public safety and promote stability for individuals facing credible threats of retaliatory harm. Potential equity benefits are likely to be concentrated in communities experiencing elevated rates of firearm violence.

Analysis

Under the bill, an individual may request participation in the program through VSU. An individual is eligible for assistance if the individual (1) is a victim of gun violence in the State; (2) experienced the violence within close proximity to the individual's home or lives in close proximity to a person

who is suspected to have caused the violence; and (3) demonstrates a need to be relocated for the safety of the individual or the individual's family. VSU must accept any eligible individual into the program except for an individual suspected to have perpetrated the violence. VSU must keep the personal information of applicants confidential, as specified. In addition, VSU must establish an appeal process for an individual determined to be ineligible and denied assistance under the program. VSU must (1) collaborate with other State and local agencies, including law enforcement, housing authorities, and social services, to provide comprehensive services to victims under the program; (2) conduct community outreach in order to educate the public about the program and to encourage victims of gun violence to seek assistance under the program; and (3) work to ensure that victims under the program who are renters are protected from eviction or from being denied rental housing based on the victim's status in the program.

VSU must assist an eligible victim accepted into the program by:

- relocating the victim and the victim's family to a safe location;
- providing the victim with financial assistance for moving expenses, security deposit, and rent; and
- providing other support services, including counseling, legal assistance, job training, and resources and services for individuals with disabilities.

Existing Victim Assistance Programs in Maryland

CICB awards grants to individuals who incur financial hardship as a result of crime. Those eligible for awards include (1) a victim; (2) a dependent of a victim who died as a result of a crime or delinquent act, trying to prevent a crime or specified acts, or helping a law enforcement officer perform the officer's duties or specified emergency services personnel who is obstructed in their duties; (3) any person who paid or assumed responsibility for the funeral expenses of a victim who died as a result of specified acts; and (4) family members of a victim, as specified. Awards may be made for lost wages, medical expenses, counseling, crime scene cleanup, and, for homicide victims, funeral expenses. CICB may make an award only if the claimant, as a result of the injury on which the claim is based, has (1) incurred at least \$100 in unreimbursed and unreimbursable expenses or indebtedness reasonably incurred or claimed for specified necessary expenses or (2) lost at least \$100 in earnings or support. Compensation awarded may not exceed specified limitations, and funding for these awards is provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund, which receives funding from fees assessed by circuit courts and the District Court. The fund is also supplemented by federal funds.

The Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Fund (VWPRF) is a special fund used to carry out the Victim and Witness Protection and Relocation Program, which is administered by the States' Attorneys' coordinator. The fund consists of court costs imposed on defendants convicted of crimes. The Comptroller deposits \$2.50 from each fee collected in circuit courts and the District Court (excluding fees from motor vehicle cases that are not punishable by imprisonment) to VWPRF.

The State Victims of Crime Fund is a special fund used for carrying out statutory guidelines for treatment and assistance to victims of crime and delinquent acts. GOCPP is responsible for administering the fund.

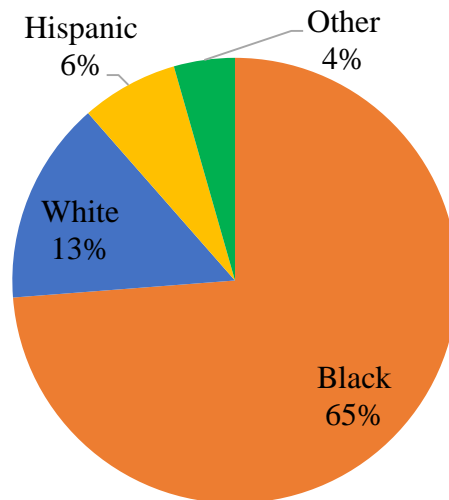
Impacts of the Bill

Gun violence has both economic and social costs. Economically, it generates medical spending, emergency response costs, policing and court costs, lost earnings, employer disruption, and long-term disability expenses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that firearm violence costs the United States tens of billions of dollars each year in medical and lost productivity costs. This could result in a far larger total societal burden once lost quality of life is included. The social impacts are harder to measure but also serious. CDC notes that people who survive firearm injuries can face paralysis, traumatic brain injury, memory and emotional problems, and chronic mental health conditions. Victim data in Maryland confirms the physical, social, and economic costs of gun violence in the State, especially as it pertains to Black victims who are overwhelmingly impacted.

Firearm-related Injuries and Deaths

The Maryland Department of Health developed the Firearm Violence Data Dashboard to offer insights and trends on firearm-related deaths and injuries in the State. Black Marylanders are overwhelmingly affected by gun violence as compared to other demographic groups. **Exhibit 1** shows nonfatal firearm-related incidents in Maryland as reported from hospital visits statewide during 2025. During that time period, Black individuals accounted for 65% of nonfatal injuries while white and Hispanic individuals accounted for 13% and 6% of injuries, respectively. Individuals of other races accounted for 4% of the injuries and the race or ethnicity of approximately 12% of the injured individuals was unknown.

Exhibit 1
Nonfatal Firearm Injuries in Maryland
2025



Source: Maryland Department of Health

Victims of Firearm-related Violent Crimes

The Department of State Police uses the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to collect and report detailed information about crime incidents, victims, offenders, and arrestees. NIBRS also captures information on the relationships between victims and offenders, as well as the use of weapons and the value of stolen or damaged property.

In 2024, NIBRS collected data on approximately 1,127 victims of violent offenses in which the perpetrator possessed a firearm; the offenses included in this data were robbery, rape, aggravated assault, and motor vehicle theft using a firearm. The data demonstrates that Black victims are significantly overrepresented in these firearm-related crimes relative to other racial and ethnic groups, with 62% of total victims compared to 29% of victims who were white and 4% who were Asian. Due to data limitations, ethnicity data was not included in this analysis.

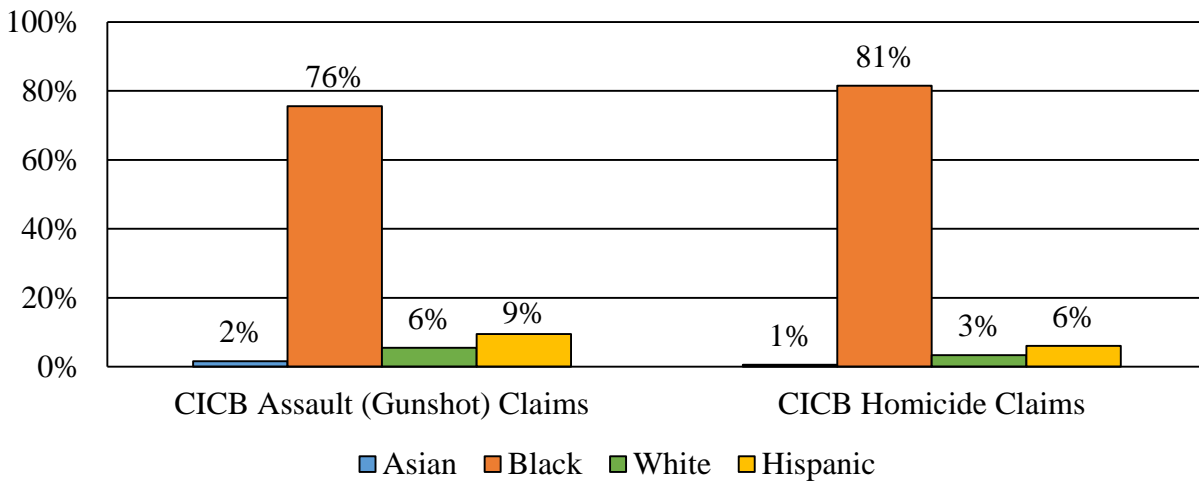
Firearm-related Crime Victim Claims Recorded by CICB

CICB awards claims primarily through a reimbursement process. As the payer of last resort, an award for unreimbursed expenses incurred as a direct result of a crime can be made only after all other available resources are exhausted, such as health insurance, social security, and workers' compensation. CICB reimburses victims for a variety of crime-related expenses, including medical/dental expenses, mental health counseling, funeral/burial expenses, one-time relocation expenses, and child care expenses.

In fiscal 2025, CICB processed a total of 1,391 claims. Of this total, 793 were new claims and 598 were from prior fiscal years, which resulted in 566 awards and 825 denials. Of the 793 new claims, 64% were from Black claimants. Racial or ethnic demographic data on the distribution of awards and denials by type of crime is not available.

In 2025, CICB documented a total of 471 claims involving assault by gunshot and homicide. The data demonstrate that Black victims are significantly overrepresented in claims due to gun violence relative to other racial and ethnic groups, as they comprise 76% and 81% of total claimants, respectively. **Exhibit 2** shows the demographic breakdown of claimants in both categories. CICB advises that while the homicide claim category includes deaths from other weapons, it consists mostly of firearm-related deaths.

Exhibit 2
CICB Victim Claims for Firearm-related Crimes
2025



CICB: Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Source: Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Conclusion

The bill creates the Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program within GOCPP, along with a special fund to assist in the relocation of gun violence victims in the State. Available crime victim data indicate that Black individuals experience disproportionate harm from firearm-related violence and have the highest rates of firearm-related injury or death. Data also show that Black and Hispanic Marylanders are more likely to be victims of gun violence compared to white Marylanders.

The Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program may improve safety and stability for individuals at elevated risk of retaliatory harm by facilitating relocation and related support. Potential benefits would likely be concentrated in communities experiencing higher rates of firearm victimization. The effectiveness of this program may depend on how the bill’s provisions are implemented and to what extent the program is able to collaborate with other entities.

A complete assessment of future equity impacts would require information on economic conditions, exposure levels, environmental risk factors, injury severity, the racial and ethnic distribution of denied CICB claims, and the reasons for claim denial.

Information Sources: Maryland Department of Health; U.S. Census Bureau; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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Appendix – Maryland Demographics

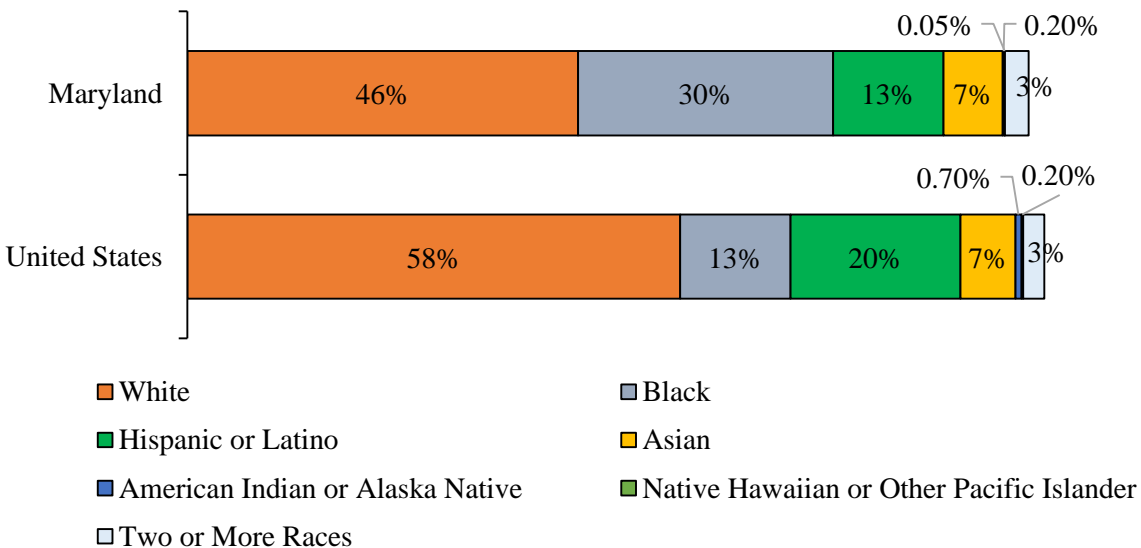
Race and Ethnicity of the Maryland Population

Maryland’s 2020 census population is 6,177,244, a 7% increase from the 2010 census count and approximately 2% higher than the 2019 census population estimates. Maryland remains one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the nation and is ranked as the fourth most diverse state by the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Diversity Index](#). While no single racial or ethnic group constitutes a majority, racial minorities as a group constitute a majority of the State’s population. This diversity underpins the analytical framework used in racial equity impact notes (REIN), which seek to identify potential disparities that may be exacerbated or created by proposed criminal justice legislation.

Methodology Update

Beginning in 2025, REIN will use annual population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program (PEP) as the basis for disparity and disproportionality calculations. This methodological update reflects best practices in demographic analysis, as PEP data incorporate births, deaths, and migration to provide the most current population counts between censuses. Although the estimates are more temporally responsive, they do not materially change the proportionate racial and ethnic breakdown observed in the 2020 census. Instead, they conservatively reflect population changes since 2020 while preserving the overall demographic composition of the State.

**U.S. and Maryland Population by Race and Ethnicity
2024 Population Estimates**



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau