



Maryland General Assembly- Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Testimony in support of SB 708 Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund

March 5, 2020

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Committee Members,

The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) is pleased to support SB 708 “Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council – Alterations.” This bill would ensure reliable and sustainable funding for evidence-based public health approaches to prevent gun violence in our communities. We respectfully ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee provide a favorable report for this important legislation.

The HAVI represents a national network of hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs). HVIPs use innovative and effective patient-focused strategies to break the cycle of violence and reduce rates of repeat injury. Founded in 2009, the HAVI represents over 40 HVIP programs across the United States. Within Maryland, the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland has paved the way for violence intervention programs both nationally and statewide, with new HVIPs such as UM Prince George's Hospital Center's Capital Region VIP recently joining the network.

Both programs provide services to violently injured individuals starting within a hospital setting and extending support once individuals are back within their communities. Evaluations of HVIPs have repeatedly demonstrated that integrating these services into hospital trauma centers and emergency departments corresponds with reductions in rates of injury recidivism and increases in patients' long-term wellbeing.

The most important aspect of the care delivered through HVIPs is carried out by frontline individuals who are trained in violence prevention and hold deep roots in Baltimore and Prince George's County. Many of these workers have been previously injured by gunshot wounds and have made the physical and mental recovery that allows them to help injured patients from the unique perspective and understanding others simply do not hold.

These violence prevention professionals act as the connection between patients and the greater health and social services system in Maryland. They are truly the most important members of the care team.

The success of this model has been proven directly in Maryland. Peer-reviewed research on the Shock Trauma VIP, published in the Journal of Trauma, shows the HVIP reduces the risk of repeat injury from 36% to 5%; reduces the risk of violent retaliation and subsequent conviction of a violent crime four-fold, and increases employment levels in participants from 20% to 82%.

Given the success of these programs, the creation of Maryland's Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund (VIPF) was a strong first step in expanding the scope of these proven interventions. When the VIPF was established, we were delighted at the opportunity to scale-up our workforce of violence prevention professionals to match the degree of need in both locations. Unfortunately, due to the unpredictability of funding through the existing program, this has made hiring for violence intervention professionals a challenge. Consistent and predictable funding is extremely important for program success.

We believe SB 708 makes valuable improvements to Maryland's VIPF Fund to save lives and ensure safety in our most vulnerable communities. The bill mandates \$10 million in funding for the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program each year, as well as strengthens the ability to conduct high-quality evaluations for all grant recipients.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable report on SB 708* Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fatimah', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fatimah Loren Muhammad
Executive Director
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI)
Phone: (862) 800 - 6649