

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 822**  
**February 25, 2020 \* Appropriations Committee**

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson and Committee Members,

The Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County provides a range of services to individuals impacted by domestic violence. The Family Crisis Center operates the county's sole domestic violence shelter, an abuser intervention program, victim advocacy, the county's domestic violence and sexual assault 24/7 hotline, and outpatient counseling/coaching services. In addition, the Family Crisis Center cooperates with the Baltimore County Police Department through the Lethality Assessment Project and provides advocacy and court accompaniment to individuals seeking protective orders.

Services offered by most domestic violence service agencies focus on cases involving high risk of injury and lethality. While these services will continue to be essential core services, there has been insufficient focus on prevention. While some centers offer primary-prevention efforts directed to the general community or to at-risk populations, such as teen dating violence, there has been very little innovation and research directed at early intervention services. Early intervention is a critical public health approach directed to cases in which the problem is already present, but at an earlier, less intense, and less severe stage. Early intervention depends on cross-sector screening and detection, as well as providing interventions to disrupt progression.

An example of early intervention in health care is the ability to screen all patients, including those who are asymptomatic, for elevated glucose levels. Early detection and prompt treatment, including lifestyle intervention, can prevent the occurrence of diabetes or delay the progression of the disease, reducing the disease burden of diabetes. To provide intervention only at the most critical stage of the disease would be akin to asking patients to return for care when they are in need of amputation.

In 2018, the Family Crisis Center began to focus efforts on early intervention. There is little research on evidence-based interventions and FCC has committed to making a contribution to these efforts. With funding support from the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program, FCC launched an Early Intervention Program as a pilot project, working with a researcher through funding from Johns Hopkins University and serving just under 100 clients in the first year. Recently, the Family Crisis Center has been recognized as a Center for Excellence in Prevention, in the field of domestic violence. The goal of the project is to work across sectors, such as health care, schools, the justice system, and the child welfare system to screen, detect, and intervene in domestic violence occurring in families that is earlier, less intense, and less severe.

Disrupting cycles of violence occurring in families across generations and resulting in childhood exposure to domestic violence is critical to the issue of violence prevention. Domestic violence, including childhood exposure, predicts all other forms of violence, including child maltreatment, bullying, juvenile crime, gang violence, gun violence, community violence, suicide, and mass shootings ([www.futureswithoutviolence.org/preventing-violence-a-review-of-research-evaluation-gaps-and-opportunities/](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/preventing-violence-a-review-of-research-evaluation-gaps-and-opportunities/)).

Domestic violence is a significant contributor to crimes of violence. In 54% of mass shootings in the U.S., the shooters killed intimate partners and other family members. Nearly 1 million women alive in the U.S. today have been shot or shot at by an intimate partner and another 4.5 million have been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner. Nearly 50% of female homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner. 81% of victims in 2016 shootings were women and children. An estimated 10 million children in the U.S. are exposed to domestic violence in the home. Intimate partner violence intersects with child maltreatment in 60-70% of cases.

According to the 2017 Maryland UCR, there were over 32,000 domestic-related crimes in the state, 70% of which were committed by an intimate partner. Both men (1 in 10) and women (1 in 4) report experiencing physical or sexual violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner. These forms of violence often begin early in life; most first-time victimization occurred prior to age 25 and frequently before age 18. Children exposed to domestic violence suffer a number of long-term adverse consequences, including negative impact on neuropsychological development, learning, school achievement, and behavioral health issues. These children are more prone to engage in bullying and delinquent behaviors and have a higher risk of becoming either a perpetrator or victim of domestic violence later in life.

The Family Crisis Center is currently launching a collaborative project in Baltimore County to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in the county, which is the jurisdiction with the highest reported incidents of domestic-related crimes. This will include efforts to evaluate outcomes across a range of sectors, programs, and services, including early intervention efforts. The Family Crisis Center supports HB 822, funding the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program, particularly in providing sustainable funding in order to assess long term outputs and to strengthen the evaluation component of programs. Most programs are evaluated from a narrow perspective within a short period of time, typically one year or less, focusing on outcomes such as numbers served rather than measuring progress. Programs are often provided within the non-profit sector and these agencies need support, assistance, and partnership from the research community in improving evaluation, sharing data, and increasing accountability.

Multiple risk factors have a cumulative negative effect on children and youth development, which in turn is associated with long-term adverse consequences, including perpetration and victimization related to violence. Concentrating prevention efforts on known risk factors and determinants of violence requires collaborative effort across sectors. Reducing violence is a long-term objective and it is important to have clear benchmarks to measure progress.

We ask for a favorable report on HB 822.

Sincerely,

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