

March 5, 2020

Re: SB 708: Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council - Alterations

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson and Committee Members,

We, members of the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Advisory Council, are writing in support of SB 708. This bill provides alterations to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP), created by legislation sponsored by Delegate Lierman in 2018.

This program supports effective violence reduction strategies by providing competitive grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations to fund evidence-based health programs or evidence-informed health programs. These are strategies that have been proven to reduce and prevent violence and trauma, especially in disproportionately impacted communities. The Advisory Council is directed to advise on the allocation and administration of funds; the application and eligibility determination process; and evaluation of outcomes of the violence prevention and intervention programs.

We feel that the alterations in SB 708 are essential to the success of the MDVIPP and the proven strategies across Maryland it could be supporting. For the program to achieve its goal of violence reduction across the state, it's grantees must be able to rely on sustainable, long-term funding. And, in order to assess impact, support strong implementation, and ensure that we are making the correct investments through these grants, we need to substantially strengthen the evaluation component of this program. After two years advising on the administration of this program, we now better understand the strengths and gaps of the program, and have crafted this bill in response so that the MDVIPP can achieve its full potential.

In 2019, after learning that the Governor had budgeted no funding in FY20 for the MDVIPP, we sent a letter to him requesting that he reconsider and fund the program in FY20 and FY21 budget. We received no response.

Thank you for your consideration of our letter. We urge the committee to pass this legislation to help fulfill our duty to reduce violent crime across the state of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Lisa Spicknall  
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Joseph B Richardson  
University of Maryland College Park

Tara Reed Carlson  
R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center

Matan Zeimer, MDVIPP Advisory Council

Jennifer Edwards  
Calvert County Health Department/Maryland  
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