



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

February 25, 2020

**AMAZING
GRACE
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN
CHURCH**

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To: Maryland Senators and Delegates

From: Pastor Gary Dittman

Re: Support of Md VIPP (SB708)

Dear Senators and Delegates,

Thanks you for receiving my letter of support of Violence Intervention and Prevention Program. SB708

I am Pastor at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in the McElderry Park community of East Baltimore. I have been Pastor here over 10 years now. I collaborate with many neighbors and community partners in stopping violence and making our community a healing safe place. I work closely with Safe Streets, Baltimore City Health Department anti-violence programs, including Supporting Male Survivors of Violence, and I am a part of the Community University Coordinating Council for Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute.

I have read the data. I know that investing in this work saves lives. But I don't just know it from what I've read. I've walked with neighbors saddened in pain, praying at vigils. I've seen Safe Streets outreach workers ease the stress on the streets, interrupt an escalating beef before another trigger gets pulled.

This work is intense, and requires culturally competent players who are trusted and can gain access into some of the most tricky and complicated environments in Baltimore. This program saves lives. The data reveals it.

I ask you to strongly support this bill, which will strengthen an already effective program. The funding will facilitate stronger evaluation and accountability. But more importantly from my perspective, it will insure continuity, which means investing in a safer Baltimore, a safer Maryland.

Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any questions for you.

Sincerely,

Pastor Gary Dittman