



March 5, 2020

Senate Bill 708

**Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program
Fund and Advisory Council - Alterations
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill - Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council - Alterations. This bill requires the Governor to include \$10,000,000 in the annual State budget for the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund, which supports violence reduction strategies by providing competitive grants to local governments to fund evidence-based health programs or evidence-informed health programs. Anne Arundel County would benefit from this increase in local funding as Anne Arundel County's Gun Violence Prevention Task Force (GVPTF) approaches eliminating violence from a public health perspective.

In response to the alarming trend of violent acts committed by individuals using guns as the preferred weapon of choice, County Executive Steuart Pittman appointed GVPTF in April 2019. The task force explored the latest research, compiled relevant facts and data, identified best practices from other jurisdictions, and issued its preliminary recommendations in December 2019. Those recommendations include a broad range of fact-based proposals and intervention strategies that can be implemented at the local level to prevent gun violence before it occurs.

In addition to stronger preventative actions, the GVPTF report calls for expanded public outreach and education, shared data collection and enhanced gun safety measures. The recommendations were developed through the lens of public health and reflect the growing consensus within the public health community that firearm-related deaths and injuries have reached epidemic levels. Public health organizations, academic researchers, and medical groups such as the American Public Health Association, the National Medical Association, the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics each have determined that gun violence is a major threat to public health which will require a public health response. The funding required under this bill supports that work.

Accordingly, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 708.