

**Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings**  
**SB: 708: Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP) Fund and**  
**Advisory Council-Alternations**  
**Maura Taylor on behalf of the Canton Community Association**  
**Position: Support**

On behalf of the Canton Community Association, I urge a favorable report on SB 708: Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council-Alterations. We were pleased when HB 432 Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund was passed in 2018 and the governor provided \$5M in funding. However, the subsequent disinvestment in our communities and our citizens in 2019 and 2020 when the governor zeroed out the budget is not acceptable.

We support the mandated appropriation called for in this legislation because these critical programs must have a reliable, consistent source of funding that can not be left to the discretion of any governor. We believe the evaluative components included in the legislation along with the expansion to hospital programs or individuals or entities in collaboration with a hospital and provides intensive counseling, case management, and social services to individuals who are recovering from injuries resulting from violence further strengthen the legislation.

We are at a critical juncture in Baltimore City as the gun violence and murder rates continue to rise and our citizens—particularly our children—continue to suffer trauma after trauma. We need more programs that use a public health and holistic approach. We need healing.

According to the Division of Correction, in Fiscal Year 2018, **Maryland's average daily** inmate population was 19,151 at a **cost** of \$45,875 **per** person. That is \$878,552,125 per year. The **average** length of stay was a little over two years (28.65 months). This legislation is asking for \$10,000,000. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2015, one out of three inmates in Maryland prisons was from Baltimore City and the state spent \$300M to incarcerate them--\$17M of which was just to incarcerate 458 citizens from Sandtown/Winchester/Harlem Park. Imagine if those monies had been spent to transform that community.

It is much less costly, in terms of the impact on society and communities to prevent crime and to work toward healing individuals who are at the highest risk for perpetrating crime than it is to continue mass incarceration which disproportionately impacts poor communities and black and brown males, in particular. From a public safety standpoint, violence intervention and prevention programs make our city safer. And, not only will we be safer, lives will be changed and lives will be saved. Imagine a city where instead of further traumatizing communities, we provide for holistic change that values the potential of individuals and embraces the possibility of change.