



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 708
March 5, 2020 * Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Chair Will Smith, Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher and Committee Members,

My name is Brian A. Hawkins, President and CEO of Family Health Centers of Baltimore. At present we operate two health centers in South Baltimore and service approximately 6,000 residents in the Cherry Hill and Brooklyn-Curtis Bay area.

On Sunday February 9, 2020, our community experienced a shooting that led to a death. Then on Monday February 10, 2020, we had additional shootings, this time during school dismissal. In this last incident three victims were shot resulting in two deaths. What is worse is the children had to walk past the bodies as they went home.

Luckily, in Cherry Hill we have a Safe Streets group, a Baltimore City initiative attached to our organization and Violence Interrupters were able to curtail additional acts of serious violence. In fact, prior to these shooting the area in Cherry Hill which Safe Streets patrols, celebrated 365 days without a homicide.

Cherry Hill once a thriving community built for African American soldiers returning from World War II and the Korean War, has been marred by violence and drugs. Now thanks to programs such as Safe Streets and others, Baltimore City and the State of Maryland funding HAS made a difference.

SB 708 is vital to ensure the resurgence of communities like Cherry Hill and Brooklyn-Curtis Bay. Violence is not only a crime, it is a health crisis of epidemic proportions. Ten million dollars is a drop in the bucket in what is needed to continue to fight crime and eradicate this disease.

Together we must continue to support Violence Interventions and Intervention Programs. Baltimore, the largest city in Maryland, is vital to the Mid-Atlantic region on the comeback. To ensure Baltimore is no longer viewed as a crime riddled and rat-infested city, we must continue to fund SB 708.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian A. Hawkins, MHA
President and CEO
Family Health Centers of Baltimore