



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG
Mayor

MICHAEL S. HARRISON
Police Commissioner

TO: The Honorable Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Michelle Wirzberger, Esq., Director of Government Affairs, Baltimore Police Dept.

RE: Senate Bill 708 Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and Advisory Council - Alterations

DATE: March 5, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore Police Department **supports** Senate Bill 708.

Senate Bill 708 requires the Governor to include \$10,000,0000 in the annual State budget to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund; allows hospital-based violence intervention programs that provide intensive counseling, case management and social services to individuals who are recovering from injuries resulting from violence to be eligible for VIPP funding; and requires independent, third-party evaluators to assess the efficacy of each evidence-based health programs or evidence-informed health program that receives funding under this subtitle.

The Baltimore Police Department fully recognizes that the path to successfully reducing violence involves more than law enforcement alone. While BPD's role is a critical pillar in a comprehensive violence reduction plan, the City's role in connecting individuals to effective programs to prevent and respond to violence is paramount in breaking the cycle of violence. BPD's comprehensive violence reduction strategy is strengthened by its close partnership with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and focuses on five key areas: **Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, Rehabilitation, and Re-Entry**. While other bills before the legislature address the last three subject areas, Senate Bill 708 is key to successfully growing Prevention and Intervention efforts in Baltimore City.

Among the best practices that we are leveraging in Baltimore is an investment in connecting individuals to violence prevention programs. By convening with community leaders and a diverse array of stakeholders from the criminal justice system, faith-based organizations, schools, and neighborhood groups, we can develop a network of resources to effectively engage our youth and those caught up in the groups involved with violence.

There are many different programs in Baltimore that are working on strategies to reduce the impact of risk factors for violence in our communities, all with the goal of intervening at the first signs of risk or responding effectively when acts of violence do occur. BPD is working in coordination with the Safe Streets program, Roca, and other program providers to interrupt the cycle of violence through targeted street level outreach and provide hospital responses after shootings. Our strategy is to create a "hub" to connect the various faith communities, neighborhood organizations, and non-profit service providers to ensure that all organizations in the city are able to actively and effectively contribute to our violence reduction efforts.

The Baltimore Police Department enthusiastically **supports** Senate Bill 708 because it ensures that programs that are essential to the interruption of violence can be funded adequately and respectfully request a **favorable** report.