

**SB 708 – Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund
and Advisory Council – Alterations**

Position: *Support*

Bill Summary

SB 708 would require the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$10 million to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund.

MedStar Health's Position

MedStar Harbor Hospital is proud to partner with Baltimore's Safe Streets Program. MedStar Harbor Hospital employs two Hospital Violence Responders to work collaborative with Cherry Hill's Safe Streets community site. Responders work in the emergency department with victims and perpetrators of violence. The target populations are individuals at high risk of involvement in shootings and neighborhood-related violence.

The Responders implement strategies to reduce violence related to injury re-admissions, intervene in scenarios of retaliation, and support access to the wrap-around services offered by MedStar Harbor Hospital and affiliates. The Responders provide direct services by means of education, advocacy, and service coordination of individuals injured through violence to extend the support services of MedStar Harbor Hospital in collaboration with Safe Streets Baltimore.

Since implementation in April 2019, Harbor Hospital responders have worked with more than 140 patients. Patients present as gunshot, stabbing, and other assault-related victims. The hospital is currently forming a partnership with University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center to support patients that ultimately may be transferred from MedStar Harbor Hospital for more advanced care.

Most patients seen are referred and linked to community-based organizations for assistance to eradicate the cycle of violence in their own lives. For example, one patient presented to the emergency department with a gunshot wound to his foot. The patient was aggressive to emergency department staff, as well, but after connecting with a responder, the patient asked for assistance in turning their life around. The patient is currently on a road to sobriety and got connected to food assistance and a job training development program.

This program has also proven to be effective at the community-level to reduce homicides in Baltimore City. In December 2019, Cherry Hill celebrated one year without a homicide.

Given the success of the program, MedStar Health expanded its partnership with Safe Streets to add a Hospital Violence Responder at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital that will work collaboratively with the Belair-Edison and Woodbourne McCabe Safe Streets community sites.

Not only are these programs public-health informed interventions to reduce violence and homicides, but they also provide employment for individuals with lived experience with violence that often have a criminal record that makes it difficult to reenter society after serving time in prison.

For the above reasons, MedStar Health urges a FAVORABLE report on SB 708.