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Testimony in Support of SB406 - Local Youth Violence Review Committees
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Good afternoon Chair and to the Committee. Thank you for having me here today to tell you why I personally support SB406, which will grant counties the ability to develop local youth violence review committees.

As a graduate student at the John Hopkins School of Public Health, I am often reminded of the importance of information because we cannot manage what we do not measure. To be fair, violence, especially youth violence, is not a simple thing to measure. It stems from a wide range of factors: lack of access and resources, like food insecurity and underfunded schools, prior exposure to violence and abuse, generational trauma, the cycle of poverty and systemic discrimination that impact housing and job prospects.

To focus just on the consequences, the resulting violence, of these interrelated factors through criminal punishment has not worked to stop the problem and will continue to not work to stop the problem because the complexity of the issue demands multi-sectoral discussion and collaboration. We cannot simply police the problem away. Rather, and what this bill aims to accomplish is to give counties the latitude to bring diverse parties to the table from law enforcement, the legal sector, health care providers, and public health officials among others to address the impact that youth violence is having on their localities.

We know that violence begets violence and without focused and sustained intervention the downward spiral that disproportionately impacts communities that are low-income and communities of color will continue. We have a duty to ourselves and our communities to promote safe and secure environments for our kids to live in. With this bill, we have an opportunity to make good on that commitment.

Thank you, and I hope you will vote favorably for SB406.