



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
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HB 997

February 22, 2022

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 997 - Criminal Procedure – Restorative Justice Program
POSITION: Support

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 997.

HB 997 requires the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services to establish a Restorative Justice Program Revolving Fund, create a Maryland Restorative Justice Council, and hire a Restorative Justice Legal Specialist.

Restorative justice features face-to-face truth-telling, collective healing, and consensus-based solutions that meet the needs of crime survivors and everyone else involved. While it’s vital that we hold violent offenders accountable for the harm they cause to the community, restorative justice is a trauma-informed and participatory approach that can be both practical and healing in certain situations.

Restorative justice is consistent with Baltimore City’s public health approach to violence. Baltimore City’s Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan released by Mayor Scott in 2021 specifically highlights restorative justice practices, especially amongst youth:

“Justice for our youth is not only about immediate interventions when they make a mistake but, more importantly, providing them with the appropriate social-emotional development opportunities to foster emotional intelligence, conflict transformation skills, and appropriate behavioral responses. This is the long-term preventative work associated with violence prevention and includes strategies like restorative practices, mentoring, and cognitive behavioral therapy.”

While Baltimore is fortunate to have organizations like Restorative Response Baltimore and the Baltimore Community Mediation Center, more funding, coordination, and legal support is needed.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 997.

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