



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 350 – MARYLAND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM –
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES

Sponsors – Senator Sydnor

February 22, 2022

DONALD C. FRY

PRESIDENT & CEO

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

Senate Bill 350 requires the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide community violence prevention services for the purpose of promoting improved health outcomes and positive behavioral change, preventing injury recidivism, and reducing the likelihood that an individual who is the victim of community violence will commit or promote violence. Community violence prevention services is defined as evidence-based, trauma-informed, supportive, and nonpsychotherapeutic services provided by a certified violence prevention professional, within or outside a clinical setting. This includes peer support and counseling, mentorship, conflict mediation, crisis intervention, targeted case management referrals to certified or licensed health care professionals or social services providers, patient education, and screening services to victims of violence.

The level of violence in the state, and in particular Baltimore City, is unacceptable and substantive changes are required to improve public safety and ensure economic vitality and competitiveness. For these reasons, improving public safety has been identified by the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) as a key economic development and public safety issue that needs to be urgently addressed.

The GBC has recommended a two-pronged approach to reduce violent crime. The first prong addresses crime control through enhanced public safety programs focused on repeat violent offenders and better coordination among law enforcement agencies. The second prong - crime prevention - must be instituted simultaneously with crime control efforts. It is critically important to address the root societal causes of crime with programs that address poverty, lack of employment, need for job training programs, and an increase in after-school programs, etc. The GBC backs these types of initiatives with the same weight afforded crime control strategies.

Senate Bill 350 is consistent with the GBC's 2022 Legislative Strategy, which calls for policy solutions that address violent crime with a focus on repeat violent offenders and programs to address the root causes of criminal activity (poverty, education, job opportunities, etc.) Senate Bill 350, by proactively engaging in community violence prevention services, is an appropriate and important violence reduction strategy.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 350.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 67-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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