

HB 1005
Maryland Medical Assistance Program –
Community Violence Prevention Services
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 23, 2022

Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 1005 which would require Medicaid to provide funding for community violence prevention services.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For almost 100 years, Catholic Charities has operated programs that allow Marylanders to age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, secure stable housing and welcome new neighbors. We recognize the staggering costs of violence to our communities including somatic and behavioral health costs.

Catholic Charities has adopted a trauma informed approach to our provision of services. Whether we are providing therapy services to a youth, teaching a Head Start student or helping an individual find employment after incarceration, we witness the impact of violence on Marylanders on a daily basis. Increasing the availability of and support for violence prevention services in Maryland would have widespread benefits for those Catholic Charities serves.

There are violence prevention models that are already working in our state. Catholic Charities operates two of Baltimore City's 10 Safe Streets sites, an evidence-based public health initiative designed to reduce gun violence by deescalating and mediating disputes that might otherwise lead in that direction. Over the past six years, the Catholic Charities sites have conducted nearly 2,000 mediations and witnessed a notable drop in shootings. In Sandtown-Winchester, for example, shootings fell from 12 in 2016 to just 7 last year; and it is important to point out that this was accomplished amid an environment of increasing gun violence city-wide. As importantly, the programs have earned the trust of local communities.

Increasing the resources available for programs like Safe Streets, is a necessary step if we want to reduce violence in our communities. When violence decreases so does trauma and with a reduction in trauma we see better health, economic and educational outcomes in our communities.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 1005.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy