

STEPHANIE SMITH
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee

House Chair
Baltimore City Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 316
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3486 · 301-858-3486
800-492-7122 Ext. 3486
Stephanie.Smith@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB1005: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Community Violence
Prevention Services**

Bill Hearing: February 23, 2022, 1:30pm, Health and Government Operations Committee

Chairwoman Shane E. Pendergrass, Vice Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, and members of the committee,

In 2021, Baltimore experienced 337 homicides and over 726 shootings. For the seventh year in a row, our beloved city has passed the 300 mark in homicides, and the numbers continue to grow. The trauma caused to our constituents by this violence is unspeakable. As long as this violence continues at the rate it has been, we are failing to serve our own people, our most basic duty as legislators.

In April 2021, the Biden Administration announced several investments in community violence intervention through the 2021 American Jobs Plan, Medicaid, and existing agency funds to develop local programs led by mediators who work with those most at risk of violence and connect them to wraparound services. HB1005 aims to establish, using Medicaid funding, violence prevention services, training, and certification for violence prevention professionals (VPP).

Violence prevention services have proven effective not only in decreasing instances of violence and trauma, but in ultimately decreasing the financial burden placed upon the state and the victims. As we know, when someone experiences violence in the way that many of our constituents have, the damage is not just physical. The mental and emotional trauma dealt to

these victims will follow them for the rest of their lives, changing the course of their day-to-day lives and preventing them from ever securing their core need of safety. When someone is a victim of violent crime, the probability that they might also become a perpetrator increases substantially, creating an endless cycle of trauma dealt from family to family throughout our communities. When VPP's are efficiently connected to victims of violence, these individuals find the resources to heal, not only changing their own lives, but ultimately protecting the entire community from the risk of retaliation.

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the leading cause of death amongst Black males between the ages of 10 to 44, and is the second and third leading cause of death for Latinx men between the ages of 10 to 19, and 20 to 44, respectively. Many of these individuals are members of low-income households and communities relying on Medicaid or finding themselves uninsured and unable to find resources to heal. Of our nation's fifty states, at least nineteen of them have a violence prevention program like the one we aim to establish. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid is ready and able to provide technical and financial assistance to the state of Maryland as we work to establish this program and protect our communities from senseless violence.

I urge you to vote favorably on HB1005.

Sincerely,

Delegate Stephanie M. Smith