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Position: FAV



Senate Bill 893

Public Safety - Safer Communities Fund and Task Force - Establishment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings and Budget and
Taxation Committees

Date: March 15, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber and Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 893. This bill would establish a fund available to local governments in support of programs preventing a police response to low-level crimes and noncriminal incidences.

Many counties have already begun studying and implementing alternatives to law enforcement to address crime. Several of the initiatives supported by SB 893 are already underway in our counties, including the deployment of behavioral health crisis response units and the construction of lighting infrastructure and safer public passages. This bill would have the added effect of potentially reducing the burden placed on stretched county law enforcement.

Altogether, as the State and its counties shift toward alternative responses to crime, SB 893 would bolster current and future efforts to protect Marylanders. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 893 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

SB0893 - 3.15.22 -- Public Safety - Safer Communit

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 893 – PUBLIC SAFETY - SAFER COMMUNITIES
FUND AND TASK FORCE - ESTABLISHMENT**

Sponsor – Senator Smith

March 15, 2022

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

Senate Bill 893 would create a Safer Communities Fund, which would provide grant assistance to local governments to promote robust and holistic investments in noncarceral safety. The Fund would be a special, nonlapsing fund administered by the Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services. It would be used to support mental health response crisis teams, safety infrastructure, including lighting, pilot programs that shift the response to low-level crimes or noncriminal incidences from police, and other programs aimed at preventing a police response to low-level crimes and noncriminal incidences.

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 and increase security among Maryland citizens. Improving public safety has been identified by the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) as a key economic growth 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 programs in areas of improved policing, better technology, and other enhanced public safety initiatives including better coordination among law enforcement agencies. The second prong - crime prevention - must be instituted simultaneously and with the same degree of emphasis as 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 equally backs these types of initiatives with the same weight that is afforded crime control strategies.

The GBC supports Senate Bill 893 because it provides local governments grant funding to fund mental health response crisis teams and to improve infrastructure to create a safer physical environment. It also enables local governments to pilot innovative programs that don’t require the use of police for low-level and noncriminal incidents, enabling law enforcement to focus on more serious criminal activity.

Public safety is an essential component to a thriving economy. The additional prevention programs funded through this new grant are an excellent way to address the root causes of violence and promote a competitive business environment.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 893.

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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Takoma Park 2022 - SB 893 FAV - Safer Communities

Uploaded by: Peter Kovar

Position: FAV



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**SB 893
Support**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 15, 2022

SB 893 Public Safety - Safer Communities Fund and Task Force - Establishment

City Contact: Mayor Kate Stewart

kates@takomaparkmd.gov

The City of Takoma Park supports SB 893, which establishes state-level funding to support local-level, non-carceral approaches to public safety. A fund to provide grant assistance to local governments to promote robust and holistic investments in non-carceral public safety is exactly what is needed in communities right now.

Communities are increasingly exploring non-police, non-carceral approaches to public safety, but to be successful those approaches require financial support. The pandemic and economic conditions have driven an increase in violent crime, at the same time that cities reimagine how they approach public safety in light of a long history of mass incarceration and often discriminatory, violent policing approaches. Research supports that public space changes can deter crime, including investing in street lighting and community changes.

The Takoma Park City Council recently initiated a Reimagining Public Safety Task Force process that resulted in 50 recommendations for the City to take a more holistic approach to public safety, including recommendations to refer non-police calls to mental health or other services. The City is also developing a public space management plan and plans for hiring mental health counselors to respond to mental health calls, among other reimagining public safety efforts.

Providing a base of public funding for cities to pursue mental health and public design approaches to public safety can spur cities to explore and adopt non-policing approaches, without trading off from other funding priorities at a time when many residents are struggling.

Takoma Park therefore supports SB 893. Funding opportunities at the State level for these types of public safety programs that align with non-carceral approaches beyond police crisis interventions would be especially beneficial in light of our ongoing City initiatives.