



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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