



**BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
MAYOR

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**SB 587**

February 24, 2022

**TO:** Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

**RE:** Senate Bill 587 - Division of Parole and Probation – Duties – Offenders Under Supervision (Parole and Probation Performance Act)

**POSITION: Support**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill 587.

Senate Bill 587 requires the Division of Parole and Probation (DPP) to review incidents involving the murder of an individual under community supervision and murders committed by individuals under supervision, as well as share data and recommendations with the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and the House Judiciary Committee.

Probation and parole play an important role in the criminal justice system by providing structure to a person who has come in contact with the courts and connecting them with training, jobs, education, housing, and more. Several high-profile tragedies committed by individuals recently released from prison or under community supervision devastated Baltimore last year. These senseless killings have once again highlighted the need to strengthen community supervision, improve inter-agency coordination, and increase oversight and transparency.

Over the past three fiscal years, an average of 1.1% of all supervisees statewide were involved in incidents of homicide or non-fatal shootings according to a Nov. 1, 2021 report by DPSCS Secretary Robert Green. We must focus on this relatively small group of individuals who generate the bulk of serious violence and face high victimization risks. This will require the careful collection of both quantitative and qualitative data as well as a problem analysis to make policy recommendations.

Under Mayor Scott's leadership, Baltimore City has increased the use of shooting and fatality reviews to problem-solve around violent crime. In preparation for the launch of the Group

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Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS), researchers at the University of Pennsylvania conducted a systematic analysis of homicides and shootings in the Western District. Among the relevant findings was a recognition that a very small number of extremely high-risk people are involved in gun violence and the people at the center of gun violence are mostly well known to the criminal justice system. In addition to weekly GVRS shooting reviews, Baltimore City is making policy changes based on a recent Child Fatality Review Report and re-launching the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team.

This bill seeks to address the disproportionately high rates of Baltimore City residents under supervision who are involved in homicides or nonfatal shootings. According to a 2020 scoping evaluation of DPP, 45% of Baltimore City murder victims were under DPP supervision when they were murdered. Data in this evaluation by the Department of Legislative Services “suggests that individuals under DPP supervision in Baltimore City are an identifiable vulnerable population, susceptible to falling victim to murder at a disproportionate rate compared to individuals not under DPP supervision.”

Of all DPP supervised individuals involved in either homicide or non-fatal shooting over the past three years, as either a victim or suspect, were in Baltimore City (64%), followed by Prince George’s County (16%), and Baltimore County (6.5%). Men comprised 98% of the individuals involved in these incidents according to a 2021 DPSCS report.

As of January 1, 2020, there were 143 DPP agents who oversaw approximately 9,345 cases. This means that approximately 1.6% of Baltimore City’s population is under DPP supervision. Between 2000 and 2018, probation lengths increased by 7% in Maryland according to Pew Research Center, with no measurable gains to public safety. We must use this opportunity to analyze the current problem and adopt best practices around probation and parole rather than continue to increase penalties for all.

Research indicates that individuals are most at risk to re-offend within the first 10-18 months and that the initial months of supervision are most crucial for making stability-building connections to services and supports. Technical violations mostly occur in the first several months of probation, with the most common violation in Baltimore City being failure to report or failing a drug test. This has prompted leading research and policy groups from across the political spectrum to recommend shorter supervision terms, in order to focus scarce resources on the period of time most relevant for public safety. This legislation will help inform these necessary discussions around reducing the number of supervised individuals involved in homicides.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 587.