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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children, Youth,
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Joint Committee on the Chesapeake
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The Senate of Maryland

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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN SB 819-Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services – Executive Director – Appointment

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services' stated vision is to "plan, promote, and fund efforts with government entities, private organizations, and the community to advance public policy, enhance public safety, reduce crime and juvenile delinquency, and serve victims."¹

The budget for the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS), and its historical components, has grown by over a third since fiscal 2017, making it larger than nine of Maryland's principal departments. The budget is over \$200 million per year, over 95% of which is distributed as grants.

The Office of Performance Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA), an entity created by the General Assembly in 2019 with the purpose of examining certain government functions, recently issued a more than 200-page analysis of the "efficiency, effectiveness and economy" of the department and made a series of recommendations. One of the recommendations was that the next Director of the office is confirmed with the advice and consent of the Senate. That is all that SB819 does - require the appointment of the next GOCPYVS Director to be confirmed by the Senate.

According to the OPEGA report, "the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services' (GOCPYVS) core functions and policy areas have grown in recent years. GOCPYVS has expanded from an office mainly administering grants into a larger multidisciplinary team covering several functions and policy areas. GOCPYVS now encompasses the prior Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP), the prior Governor's Office for Children (GOC), and a Victim Services Unit."

GOCPYVS' focus is on criminal justice and law enforcement; children and youth; and victim services. They are supposed to: develop a comprehensive crime plan; advise the Governor; coordinate resources between state and local government; administer grants, including state grants, as well as act as a pass-through for federal grants; and analyze crime data.

¹ "About Us." 2015. Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services. May 18, 2015. <http://gocep.maryland.gov/about/>.

There have been particular challenges for GOCPYVS: presenting information that is requested by this body; submitting reports in a timely manner; creating a Crime Plan that details measurable goals and objectives; making information available to the public in a user-friendly manner, and communicating grant application procedures and award determinations.

At a time when public safety is of utmost importance to the General Assembly and the public at large and in light of the tremendous growth and change the department has experienced over the past number of years, providing the Senate with the opportunity to exercise its role of advice and consent will help to ensure that GOCPYVS' leadership has the requisite skills to address the program's challenges going forward.