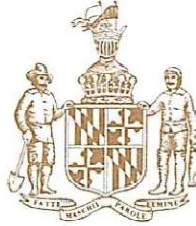


**BEN BARNES**  
*Legislative District 21*  
Prince George's and  
Anne Arundel Counties

—  
*Chair*  
Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Greetings Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

House Bill 186 is critical to the viability of our victim services in the State. HB 186 will invest in our state's victim services infrastructure, expand access to thousands of survivors, and supplement the federal funding shortages that coincided with the federal Victim Crime Act.

Over the past few years, funding for victim services has been inconsistent. Within a 4-year period, funding decreased by \$43 million, which left unchallenged could jeopardize critical services such as rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, and legal service organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, grants from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services were cut by nearly 20%. Although the administration restored the cuts, the need for quality victim service programs continue to increase. It is imperative that additional steps be taken to alleviate the fluctuation of funding and ensure access to essential resources for survivors across the State.

HB 186 achieves stability for victim service providers by requiring the State to allocate a total of \$60 million in state funds annually to the victim services program. This total can be reached with State or Federal funds.

Survivors of crime should be able to access services without dealing with limited resources or lack of available staff to help them. Organizations who rely on the State can better achieve their goals of serving diverse communities and be a reliable support system for survivors everywhere. HB 186 is critical to ensuring that Maryland leaves no survivors behind, and I ask for a **Favorable** report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Barnes".

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
District 21