

TONY BRIDGES
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

To: The Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Delegate Tony Bridges, Legislative District 41

Re: **Support** - House Bill 751- Public Safety - Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund

Date: March 7th, 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 751. This legislation will establish the Community Wellness Training Grant Fund within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS). This grant program would support local law enforcement agencies so they can provide Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety Training (MHFAPS) and Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support Training (CISM).

MHFAPS training teaches how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. This training gives an officer the skills needed to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use challenge and help connect them to the appropriate care. This type of training and most importantly the critical de-escalation and support mechanisms taught can save lives if we can train more officers.

CISM training is more focused on how to support our officers that experience occupational stressors through critically important peer support. This type of support and training has the ability to not only allow our officers to serve to the greatest of their ability but will also help us further retain our dedicated law enforcement personnel.

This bill aims to subsidize officers who voluntarily participate in programs such as MHFAPS, and CISM. These programs benefit first responders and provide an avenue for them to better themselves and their communities. Funding these programs will send a message to first responders that they are valued. This bill will also send the message that community members' wellbeing is valued, by encouraging officers to be better trained to properly navigate complex situations.

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on House Bill 751.