



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 833 – Prince George's County Violence Interrupter Support Program Fund

SPONSOR: Prince George's County Senators

HEARING DATE: February 22, 2023

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS Senate Bill 833 – Prince George's County Violence Interrupter Support Program Fund**, which establishes the Prince George's County Violence Interrupter Support Program Fund, a special, nonlapsing fund, to provide funding for violence interrupter support programs that use community-based efforts to reduce incidents of violence in Prince George's County. For fiscal 2025 through 2028, the Governor may include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$1.0 million to the fund.

When community institutions are weakened, people feel they're on their own and may respond to uncertainty by assuming the worst, carrying weapons and reacting to aggression with even greater aggression. An analysis of police searches conducted in Prince George's County showed that more firearms were found during street and traffic stops. This data suggests that more people are carrying guns than before. In August 2022, Prince George's County experienced the deadliest month in history as a result of the increased number of homicides. Daily, the reports of murders being committed by juveniles as young as 12 sent shock waves to the community. The number of young lives being lost has left many residents feeling hopeless and unsafe in their own neighborhoods.

SB 833 will expand and deepen the current Violent Interrupters program in Prince George's County, which is an anti-violence initiative that supports community-based efforts at reducing incidents of violence within Prince George's County. Direct services included as part of the program include:

- sessions with accredited mental health clinicians;

- 1:1 mentorship relationships and workshops on goal setting, conflict resolution, addiction and grief management;
- case management to include referrals to appropriate services and resources;
- resource distributions such as food, clothing, and hygiene kits;
- financial literacy workshops and credit counseling;
- eviction and foreclosure prevention training;
- job training and certification (customer service, CDL, computer skills); and
- summer internships to youth paired with participating organizations.

There are currently four highly trained Violence Interrupters deployed in Prince George's County. Their deployment location is determined using Prince George's Police Department crime stats to engage in a data-driven approach to identify and respond to hotspot areas and communities would help further reduce violent crime. Violence Interrupters are deployed to District Heights, Forestville, and Suitland and began building relationships and establishing trust within those communities. The additional funding from **SB 833** will significantly increase the impact of this program to reduce violence in our community.

The original version of the bill mandated \$1 million in funding for the program annually for fiscal years 2025 through 2028, but was changed to make it discretionary. We ask that the bill be amended to make the funding mandatory again.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 833 WITH AMENDMENTS** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.