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2023 SESSION
Written Testimony

BILL NO: SB0598
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
POSITION: Letter of Support
TITLE: Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund --
Appropriation

BILL ANALYSIS:

SB0598 alters the annual appropriation that the Governor is required to include in the budget bill for the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund from \$3,000,000 to \$40,000,000.

POSITION RATIONALE:

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health supports SB0598 as the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIP) supports the effective violence reduction strategies, specifically gun violence, through evidence-based and evidence-informed health programs. In 2019, Anne Arundel County declared gun violence as a public health issue and has since established the Gun Violence Intervention Team (GVIT) as a demonstration of the county's commitment to decreasing gun violence. According to the Anne Arundel County Department of Health's 2022 Report Card, suicide comprised 59% of all gun deaths and homicides were 40% of all gun deaths over the past five years.

Increasing funds for the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program is critical to the successful implementation of Anne Arundel County's efforts to decrease gun violence which includes establishing a Violence Interruption Program (VIP). Cure Violence Global (CVG), a national organization with expertise in evidence-based violence interruption programs, conducted an assessment in Annapolis to determine whether and how a VIP should operate in Annapolis to address the increase in gun violence injuries and homicide. Their recommendation for 4 to 5 violence interruption sites in Annapolis is now awaiting implementation as we search for funding. Based on other programs that have successfully implemented the CVG model, annual costs after implementation would be approximately \$700K-\$800K per year for a pilot program with additional funds needed in subsequent years to expand the program to all

sites identified in Annapolis. Additionally, other communities disproportionately affected by gun violence in Anne Arundel County are being evaluated for violence intervention programs.

According to the American Public Health Association (APHA), gun violence is the leading cause of premature death in the United States resulting in more than 38,000 deaths and approximately 85,000 injuries each year. Moreover, gun violence costs the United States \$280 billion annually as these costs are associated with various factors such as emergency transportation, work loss, medical care, and decreased quality of life. Data shows that gun deaths and injuries cost Maryland \$10.5 billion each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized violence as an urgent public health problem that affects people from all stages of life with physical, emotional, and economic consequences. Healthy People 2030 included Violence Prevention as one of the leading objectives for the U.S., noting that children who experience violence are at risk for long-term physical, behavioral, and mental health problems.

Violence intervention programs have been shown to be an effective method in reducing violence in communities. Research shows that a violence interruption program in South Bronx, New York was associated with a 63 percent decrease in gun shooting victimization and research also shows that a violence interruption program in Richmond, California was associated with reductions in firearm violence with 55% fewer deaths and hospital visits, and 43% fewer crimes. Moreover, states invested with considerable and consistent funds for evidence-based violence intervention programs have demonstrated cost savings. In Massachusetts, firearm-related activity decreased by 22%, gang-related criminal activity decreased by 31%, and nonfatal shootings also declined by 61%. Reports from Massachusetts have found that violence intervention programs save the state at least \$15 million per year. In Connecticut, violence prevention programs have resulted in reductions in shootings which has yielded millions in cost savings.

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health supports SB0598 as increased funding for violence intervention and prevention programs can decrease gun violence, decrease expenditures attributed to violence, and potentially yield millions of dollars in cost savings for the state of Maryland.

Sources:

- <http://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/vipp/>
- <https://www.aahealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/aahealthreportcard2022.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/index.html#:~:text=Violence%20is%20an%20urgent%20public,can%20be%20safe%20and%20healthy.>
- <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/gun-violence>
- https://www.apha.org/-/media/Files/PDF/factsheets/200221_Gun_Violence_Fact_Sheet.ashx
- <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/violence-prevention>
- <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Maryland-1.pdf>
- <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2017/10/02/cvinsobronxeastny/>
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