



## **Senate Bill 598 Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund – Appropriation**

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
February 22, 2023

### **Support**

**Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports SB 598**, which increases the annual appropriation for the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund from \$3,000,000 to \$40,000,000.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors.

**As one of the largest human service providers in Maryland, we see every day the staggering costs of violence in our communities and have correspondingly adopted a trauma-informed approach to service provision.** Whether we are providing therapy services to a youth, teaching a Head Start student or helping an individual find employment after incarceration, we witness the impact of violence on Marylanders on a daily basis. Increasing the funding for violence prevention services in Maryland would have widespread benefits to communities across the state.

**SB 598 is a strategic investment in violence prevention models that are proven successful.**

Catholic Charities operates four Safe Streets sites, which is an evidenced-based, public health approach to violence that saves lives and dramatically reduces gun violence in communities where it has operated. Our Safe Streets colleagues are a constant presence in the neighborhoods they serve – walking the streets in bright orange shirts that read “Stop Shooting. Start Living.” Not only do they offer mediations, but they also host neighborhood gatherings, connect youth with other resources such as free school uniforms, and serve as referral source for workforce development programs. They are credible messengers in their communities, and the results are compelling: Catholic Charities sites have conducted nearly 2,000 mediations and witnessed noticeable declines in shootings in the catchment areas they serve.

Increasing the funding available for evidence-based, violence prevention programs like Safe Streets is a crucial step if we want to reduce violence in our communities. Decreasing violence decreases trauma, and reducing trauma leads to overall better health, economic and educational outcomes in our communities. The Violence Intervention and Prevention Program targets state funding to these vital public health programs, and we strongly urge additional state investment.

**On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 598.**

Submitted By: Lisa Klingenmaier, Assistant Director of Advocacy