



Maryland General Assembly- Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of support for SB 598 Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund

February 22, 2023

Chair Guzzone and the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) is pleased to support SB 598 “Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund– Appropriation.” This bill would ensure reliable and sustainable funding for evidence-based public health approaches to prevent gun violence in our state. We respectfully ask that your committee provide a favorable report for this important legislation.

The HAVI represents a national network of hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs). HVIPs use innovative and effective patient-focused strategies to break the cycle of violence and reduce rates of repeat injury. Founded in 2009, the HAVI represents 50 programs across the United States. In fact, the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center Violence Intervention Program was one of our founding members, with UM Capital Region Health, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Lifebridge Health, and Youth Advocate Programs subsequently joining. In addition, we are helping to launch and training staff in several early stage programs.

Our programs provide services to violently injured individuals beginning in the hospital and extending care after discharge and into the community. Evaluations of HVIPs have repeatedly demonstrated that integrating these services into hospital trauma centers and emergency departments corresponds with reductions in repeat injuries and increases in multiple measures of long-term health and wellbeing, such as treatment for traumatic stress.

The success of these programs has been proven directly in Maryland. Peer-reviewed research on the Shock Trauma VIP, published in the Journal of Trauma, shows the program reduces the risk of repeat injury from 36% to 5%; reduces the risk of violent retaliation and subsequent conviction of a violent crime four-fold, and increases employment levels in participants from 20% to 82%.

Given the success of these programs, the creation of Maryland's Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund (VIPF) was a strong first step in expanding the scope of these proven interventions. However, consistent and predictable funding is extremely important for

program success. The most important aspect of the care delivered through HVIPs is carried out by frontline individuals who are trained in violence prevention and hold deep roots in the communities they serve. Many of these workers have been previously injured by gunshot wounds and have made the physical and mental recovery that allows them to help injured patients from the unique perspective and understanding others do not hold. These violence prevention professionals act as the connection between patients and the greater health and social services system in Maryland. They are truly the most important members of the care team.

When the VIPP was established, we were delighted at the opportunity to scale-up our workforce of violence prevention professionals. The initial round of funding helped launch new programs. A subsequent infusion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars laid the groundwork for a comprehensive violence intervention ecosystem in our state. However, the ARPA dollars are a time-limited infusion, setting up a looming fiscal cliff that requires action from the General Assembly.

We believe SB 598 makes valuable improvements to Maryland's VIPP Fund to save lives and ensure safety in our most vulnerable communities.

For these reasons, we ask that the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee provide a favorable report on SB 598 Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyle Fischer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kyle Fischer, MD, MPH
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