



Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Guzzone:

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance would like to express our strong support for Senate Bill 874, which would establish Community Safety Works as an ongoing program within the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Established as a budget initiative within the Department, Community Safety Works has already provided valuable assistance to nonprofit organizations, businesses, and local governments through targeted investments in crime prevention that impact community safety.

Downtown Bel Air has greatly benefited from funding provided by the Community Safety Works grant program. Pedestrian safety is a concern in the Town of Bel Air. Within the last five years two pedestrians were killed in Downtown Bel Air. Bel Air's signature events attract thousands of individuals throughout the region. The increase in population and traffic causes a rise in criminal and negligible incidents affecting the lives of our community members. In 2020, the Town of Bel Air had a total of 159 violent crime and property crime incidents. In the same vein of public safety, Bel Air's six-story parking garage (privately co-owned by TOBA and Harford County) is utilized by residents and visitors who attend Bel Air's events but the lack of security cameras on the five lower levels of the garage was concerning because there has been an increasing rate of criminal and suspicious activity in the garage. In 2021 there was a total of 121 suspicious behavior incidents, five vandalism incidents, two incidents involving controlled substances, and 11 check the welfare incidents. Due to the rise in crime, many members of the community did not feel safe utilizing the parking garage.

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance is a non-profit community development organization whose mission is to mobilize stakeholders to invest in Bel Air's neighborhoods, economy, and quality of life.

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance received funding to purchase 100 8 ½ feet steel barricades. The barricades have been utilized to better control the flow of traffic and block vehicle access to restricted areas during Bel Air's outdoor festivities. Pedestrians are now able to enjoy outdoor activities in Downtown Bel Air knowing that they are in a safe environment protected from vehicular traffic. We also received funding for the purchase and installation of twelve surveillance cameras through the Community Safety Works grant program. The security cameras are now being monitored 24 hours a day by the Bel Air Police Department. The installation of the surveillance cameras in the parking garage have improved community safety. Residents and visitors who utilize the parking garage have reported feeling safer knowing criminal activity in the garage has declined and that the surveillance cameras are being monitored.

Again, this is to request a favorable report on SB874 to continue this valuable program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Falcone". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jennifer Falcone
Executive Director