



March 6, 2023

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

Dear Senator Guzzone:

On behalf of Downtown Frederick Partnership, I 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.

The Partnership has utilized Community Safety Works funding to support two initiatives that currently are underway and a third initiative that will be implemented later this year. These projects include the Downtown Frederick Ambassador Program, a security camera grant program and a new effort to purchase speed boxes.

The Downtown Frederick Ambassador Program was launched in response to a local initiative that worked for several months to discuss the community's concerns related to changes in the transient population, the use of drugs and other inappropriate activity in Carroll Creek Park and the desire for improved cleanliness throughout downtown. The findings of this work were instrumental in undertaking the Ambassador Program. Launched in late November 2021, the Ambassador Program improves cleanliness, provides a stronger safety presence and ensures a robust welcome to visitors. In the first full year of implementation, the following statistics give a sense of the program's significant impact in Downtown Frederick: 9,396 block faces cleaned, 655 biohazards removed, 1009 stickers/posters removed, 902 business contacts and 1,168 people utilized hospitality services.

While the statistics are impressive, some of the stories behind the numbers show the full impact of this program:

- the older woman downtown who couldn't make it back to her friend's car and the ambassador who found her a chair and water and waited with her till her friend could pick her up
- the young woman who found that her car battery was dead early one morning and was assisted to get back on the road
- the middle aged man who had too much to drink and was persuaded to have his daughter drive him home

The Partnership and the community are convinced of the power of the Ambassador Program. That said, it is expensive to implement at a cost of nearly \$350,000 per year. Staffing costs are the most significant expense. The starting wage currently is \$16 per hour. The Community Safety Works Grant has been a key part of the Partnership's efforts to fully fund this important program.

19 E Church St
Frederick, Maryland 21701
p: 301.698.8118
f: 301.698.4881
www.downtownfrederick.org

The Partnership also has utilized this funding to support the implementation of security cameras on the first floor of commercial buildings in Downtown Frederick. Thirty two downtown businesses received grants of up to \$500, resulting in a total of 142 new security cameras. Each business is required to have at least one camera facing the street. Businesses who receive a grant give permission for their cameras to be registered with the City of Frederick Police Department for at least two years (until January 31, 2025). Businesses also are agreeing that, if asked, they will share their footage with the City of Frederick Police Department. Registering cameras helps businesses and law enforcement address crime-related issues collaboratively. Already, the cameras have helped to return a stolen laptop and assist with identifying suspects in a robbery.

Finally, the Partnership has worked closely with the City Police Department to respond to community concerns and the Partnership will be utilizing new Community Safety Works funding to purchase speed boxes. The Police Department will utilize these boxes to monitor problem spots within Downtown Frederick. The data will be helpful in learning how and when to effectively deploy resources to best resolve community concerns.

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, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kara Norman, AICP
Executive Director