



CARE BRAVELY

SB874 - Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund – Establishment

Position: **SUPPORT**

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee – March 7, 2023

Testimony of Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development, LifeBridge Health

I write in strong SUPPORT of SB874. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

During LifeBridge Health's hospitals' Community Health Needs Assessments, participants consistently targeted community violence and safety as key concerns. In response, we developed our Center for Hope, addressing all types of violence intervention and prevention - child abuse, elder abuse, human trafficking, domestic violence and community violence. Ensuring sustainable funding for these and other programs supporting community health and safety is critical.

One key component of our community violence strategy is our legacy Safe Streets program and our recent tripling of the number of sites under our operation upon request from the City of Baltimore. We are fortunate to obtain support from the Department of Housing and Community Development's current Community Safety Works program supporting capacity building in the areas of community engagement and infrastructure to ensure that all of our Safe Streets programs across the City succeed in their new format, and sustainable funding will facilitate continued investment in safety-oriented programs and projects.

A crucial component of the program is to mobilize the community to build and energize a base of support for Safe Streets that shifts the norm from violence as a response and recognizes it as the public health crisis it is. This involves building neighborhood-based coalitions of residents, local businesses, service organizations, and members of the faith-based community. Grant funds will support a new Community Liaison position to develop and implement a community-wide violence reduction plan and introduce a local community council.

Grant funds will also enhance use of data to drive outcomes and determine future operations. With the addition of a new data coordinator position, all Safe Streets outcomes reported in a city-wide database will be accessible to us for analysis, program evaluation and planning. Grant funds will also support operations, professional development and program supplies.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I urge a **FAVORABLE** report for SB874.

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