

**Written Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 788**  
**Criminal Procedure - Victim Compensation - Alterations**  
**Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**March 9, 2023**

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

I am Justin Graves, Director of Trauma Programs, which includes the Center for Injury Prevention and Policy at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 788 Criminal Procedure – Victim Compensation – Alterations.

This bill will create a non-discriminatory victim compensation process that is accessible to all victims of crime, or their family members left behind, provide prompt and crucial financial support when it is needed most, and remove unnecessary and arbitrary denials of financial relief for victims of crimes.

The staff of the of the Center for Injury Prevention and Policy work closely with victims of community and intimate partner violence who come through as patients of the University of Maryland Medical Center and the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. Case managers have assisted many victims of violence with filing their application for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board funding, but have seen less than a few of those applications approved for financial relief. This is a very frustrating and discouraging experience for anyone, but particularly difficult for a person who is also dealing with the trauma of their victimization. The reasons for denial have varied and include the victim not calling the police and filing a police report within the very narrow window of time that is allowed or the victim not “cooperating” with law enforcement, which is arbitrarily defined by law enforcement. The fact that these

individuals are victims of crimes is no longer acknowledged when they are denied victim compensation because of unnecessarily stringent and arbitrary eligibility guidelines.

The current victim compensation process disproportionately disqualifies and alienates applicants of color and their families from receiving compensation at alarming rates, especially Black men and youth impacted by gun and other forms of community violence. Maryland has one of the lowest grant rates of victim compensation in the country. Over half of all claims were denied victim compensation in Maryland as ineligible or closed without any compensation in FY22 with no victim of domestic violence related crimes awarded compensation. Victim Compensation is about public safety. By assisting with the destabilizing expenses that come with the trauma of violent victimization, such as medical care, mental health care, lost wages, funeral and burial expenses, crime scene cleanup and more, compensation helps reduce the risk of future victimization and perpetration of harm, and the long-term costs of violence to the state.

It is for these reasons, that I am requesting a **favorable** report.

Justin Graves, MS, MBA, RN

Director of Trauma Programs

**R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center**

Center for Injury Prevention & Policy

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