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—
Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, March 7, 2023

House Bill 1030 – Task Force to Study Murder Prevention and Reduction in Maryland

Good afternoon esteemed colleagues,

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

I stand before you today to advocate for the passage of HB 1030, the Task Force to Study Murder Prevention and Reduction in Maryland. This bill is crucial in addressing the deeply concerning issue of the increasing frequency of homicides in our state.

According to recent statistics, Maryland's murder rate is higher than the national average, with a reported rate of 11.4 per 100,000 residents in 2020 (CDC). This highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to addressing this issue.

House Bill 1030 seeks to establish a task force that will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to study the underlying factors contributing to homicides in our state. It recognizes that homicides are not isolated incidents, but rather the result of a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors, including poverty, limited access to education, inadequate mental health services, and systemic racism.

The task force, composed of experts from various sectors, including law enforcement, mental health professionals, community leaders, and policymakers, will conduct a comprehensive study on the root causes of violent crimes. Their work will provide valuable insights and recommendations that can help prevent and reduce murders in Maryland. The recommendations of the task force could potentially address a wide range of issues related to violent crimes, including increasing access to mental health services, strengthening community-police relations, implementing effective gun control measures, and promoting social and economic justice for marginalized communities. Frankly, we all need to be on the same page from all sides of this problem.

In addition to the goal and benefits of reducing violent crimes, the work of the task force will have long-term positive impacts on the overall well-being of our state. By promoting a safer and

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more just society, we can foster greater social cohesion, promote economic growth, and ensure that all members of our society are able to live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

With your support, I would like to propose the following friendly amendments to make this bill even more comprehensive and inclusive:

1. To include representatives from the domestic violence community and the office of the public defender in the workgroup, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are heard.
2. To adjust the membership of the task force to be more inclusive of local governments, allowing for a more comprehensive and locally focused approach to the study of murder prevention and reduction.
3. To include a more diverse representation of violence intervention and prevention programs, ensuring that the task force has a comprehensive understanding of the programs and services currently available to address the issue.
4. To include other wrap-around service practitioners, such as mental health professionals, substance abuse specialists, and community leaders, in the task force, to ensure that all angles of the issue are considered.
5. To increase community voices in the task force, allowing for a more representative and inclusive approach to finding solutions to murder prevention and reduction.

I urge all of you to support HB 1030 and take action in preventing and reducing murder in Maryland. The establishment of this task force is a critical step forward in addressing this complex issue and creating a safer and more just future for our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

<https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2022/01/11/how-the-murder-rate-in-maryland-compares-to-the-rest-of-the-country/>

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/homicide_mortality/homicide.htm