



## SENATE BILL 475

### *Center for Firearm Violence Prevention - Establishment*

#### WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

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**For Anne Arundel Department of Health and the Maryland Association of County Health Officers**

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health and the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO), the professional association of the chief executives of the state's 24 local public health departments (LHDs), **supports SB 475**. The bill establishes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention within the Maryland Department of Health with the purpose of reducing firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in the State by partnering with federal, state, and local agencies and affected communities to implement a public health approach to firearm violence reduction.

Firearm violence is a leading cause of premature death in the United States, killing more than 38,000 people and causing approximately 85,000 injuries each year<sup>1</sup>. Nearly 2,500 Maryland lives were lost due to firearms from 2019-2021, with over half of these deaths to residents under the age of 35 years.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the preventable loss of life, family and community trauma, firearm violence is estimated to cost the state of Maryland \$10.5 billion<sup>3</sup> per year.

While Maryland is a national leader with strong firearm safety laws, our firearm violence rate is higher compared to other states with similar laws.<sup>4</sup> A public health approach is needed to address escalating firearm violence, which relies on recognizing violence is contagious like a disease, and can become an epidemic within a society.<sup>5</sup> There are proven methods to address firearm violence, and a statewide public health approach, using evidence-based methods, is needed to address the growing problem of firearm violence in Maryland.

Anne Arundel County has prioritized addressing firearm violence through a countywide public health approach by bringing together partners from various sectors in our Gun Violence Intervention Team (GVIT). While we are actively working to reduce firearm violence in our county consistent support is needed across the state to reduce firearm violence. The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention will promote best practices as well as seek needed federal funding to support statewide prevention efforts that will benefit all Maryland jurisdictions.

For these reasons, the Anne Arundel County Department of Health and the Maryland Association of County Health Officers **supports SB 475**. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at [rmaiora1@jhu.edu](mailto:rmaiora1@jhu.edu) or 410-937-1433. This communication reflects the position of MACHO.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/gun-violence>

<sup>2</sup> CDC Wonder, Underlying Cause of Death, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/governor-moore-proclaims-national-gun-violence-awareness-day-in-maryland.aspx#:~:text=In%20Maryland%2C%20gun%20violence%20causes,which%20is%20paid%20by%20taxpayers.>

<sup>4</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2594800>