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SB0475

February 29, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 475 – Center for Firearm Violence Prevention - Establishment
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 475.

SB 475 establishes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention within the Maryland Department of Health, which will partner with federal, State, and local agencies and affected communities to implement a whole-of-government, public health approach to firearm violence reduction.

Firearm injuries are the leading causes of death for youth ages 1-19 nationally, with disproportionately high impacts on communities of color.^{i,ii} Gun violence deaths are increasing nationwide, and even more so in Maryland. The state's rate of gun violence deaths has increased dramatically over the last decade, increasing by 54% from 2012 to 2021, compared to a 39% increase nationally.ⁱⁱⁱ The incidence of gun violence involving youth has significantly increased over the past year.^{ii,iv} According to Baltimore Police data, in 2023 there were 276 non-fatal shootings and 80 homicides involving youth under 24 years of age.

Addressing this crisis requires a multi-level and multi-faceted approach that includes going upstream to address the root causes of violence. The public health approach to violence prevention is grounded in science and recognized as a best practice. It emphasizes a multi-sector approach to understanding the problem, identifying root causes, and developing strategies for prevention.^v Streamlining and coordinating these efforts from the state level will help strengthen local efforts for systems-level change.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 475.

ⁱ US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

ⁱⁱ Bailey K. Roberts, Colleen P. Nofi, Emma Cornell, Sandeep Kapoor, Laura Harrison, Chethan Sathya; Trends and Disparities in Firearm Deaths Among Children. *Pediatrics* September 2023; 152 (3): e2023061296. 10.1542/peds.2023-061296

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 2018-2021 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2021, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Retrieved from <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10-expanded.html>

^{iv} Goldstick, J., Cunningham, R., & Carter, P. (2022). Current Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States. *N Engl J Med* 2022; 386:1955-1956. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2201761

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/publichealthapproach.html>