

BILL NO: Senate Bill 475
TITLE: Establishment of the Center for Firearm Prevention
COMMITTEE: Finance Committee
HEARING DATE: February 29 at 1 pm
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

I am the Executive Director of The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, representing the interests of the over 750 crime victims from Baltimore City that ROAR has assisted since our inception in June 2019. ROAR is a “one-stop-shop” in Baltimore City where survivors of crime can access a full range of wraparound legal, mental health, case management and nurse care management services in one place, which research has shown provides the best outcomes for survivors who are often managing myriad and complex needs. ROAR aims to co-create with survivors a community in which people who experience crime or systemic injustice are empowered to achieve their own sense of justice, healing, and well-being. ROAR’s mission is to engage with individuals and communities in Baltimore City by providing holistic, client-driven services to survivors of crime and influencing efforts to reform systemic responses to crime. **ROAR urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 475.**

At ROAR we assist victims of all types of crime, abuse, and harm who live or were harmed in Baltimore City, over 70% of whom are survivors of gun violence – family members of homicide victims and survivors of non-fatal gunshots. Hearing from survivors of gun violence, and recognizing how the issues of safety, life trajectory, and risk of being directly impacted by gun violence is deeply rooted in racism and poverty. That reality motivated me to apply for and enroll in the Bloomberg American Health Initiative (BAHI) at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health as a student in the Masters of Public Health program. My area of focus is violence – particularly gun violence – as a public health crisis. I started my fellowship in May 2020 and have now studied the vast majority of existing research that demonstrates what is successful in preventing and intervening in gun violence. I have also engaged in first-hand research projects under the tutelage of Dr. Joseph Richardson of the University of Maryland College Park, Departments of African American Studies and Medical Anthropology. As a co-principal investigator with Dr. Richardson, I have interviewed both male and female survivors of non-fatal gunshots from Baltimore City and I have heard first-hand from those research participants and the clients of ROAR that a coordinated, evidence-based approach is critical to reducing the intolerably high rates of gun violence that wrack communities – especially Black and Brown communities – across the State of Maryland. Creating this Center for Gun Violence Prevention within the state Department of Health is a critical piece of this effort.

For the above stated reasons, **ROAR urges a favorable report on SB 475.**