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Testimony of Ramya Swami, State Policy Manager, Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
Support for SB 475
Before the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

February 29, 2024

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike, to take action, not sides, and end America's gun violence epidemic. Brady today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans from coast to coast, red and blue, young and old, liberal and conservative, to combat the epidemic of gun violence. **In furtherance of our goal to reduce firearm violence across Maryland, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is proud to support the passage of SB 475.**

Maryland leaders have persisted in prioritizing the safety and well-being of the people of Hawaii by enacting and implementing proactive, research-informed policy solutions that prevent gun violence, save lives, and spare entire communities from loss, trauma and cycles of violence. However, the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that 785 people in Hawaii are killed by gun violence each year, nearly 300 of whom die by firearm suicide.¹

One firearm death is too many, and these numbers demonstrate that there remains more work to be done to ensure the safety of Maryland residents and visitors.

It is imperative that we start treating gun violence as a public health epidemic. By prioritizing research and programs that are tailored towards addressing the root causes of gun violence, this legislature has the chance to disrupt cycles of violence and create safer, healthier communities for all citizens of Maryland.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *WISQARS Injury Data*, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

The proposed Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention would serve as a vital first step towards expanding access to funding for the state to address various forms of gun violence, including suicides, mass shootings, and surges in other forms of gun violence. Its collaboration with public health experts, community leaders, organizers, and groups most impacted by gun violence will enhance the state's ability to implement comprehensive solutions to reduce gun violence within its borders. Further, the Center's focus on data collection will empower future State Legislatures to continue to lead in this space, by introducing and implementing violence reduction policies that are backed by data.

Conclusion

As the first state office of this kind, the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention would be a vital resource for coordinating efforts between federal, state, and local agencies, facilitating data collection and research, and developing best practices for community violence intervention programs.

For these reasons, Brady urges a favorable report on SB 475, so Maryland may continue to be an example for other states to follow in the Gun Violence Prevention Space.

Sincerely,
Ramya Swami
