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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

Dear Chairwoman Beidle, Vice-chair Klausmeier, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Governor Wes Moore, I urge a favorable report on HB583/SB475 - Center for Firearm Violence Prevention - Establishment. The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention will be created within the Department of Health to consolidate and better coordinate our State's public health approach to preventing gun violence. This legislation also requires the Center to create a state plan that will be updated every four years with the goal of reducing firearm violence in Maryland.

The Center within the Department of Health will serve as a partner to federal and local governments, advocates, institutions, and medical professionals engaged in the work of hospital- and community-based violence intervention programs. There is significant evidence that violence, particularly in areas where there is a high incidence of it, can be contagious in the sense that a violent act may inspire other violent acts in retaliation. The goal of public health approaches to violence reduction is to interrupt these cycles of violence, and to inoculate the public against violence by engaging in direct, community-focused efforts that engage with individuals in their own communities and in health care settings.

Governor Moore is proud to sponsor legislation that follows President Biden's recommendation that states create their own offices of gun violence prevention. Gun violence intervention programs were pioneered in Maryland, but there is more work to do to ensure that they are adequately funded and informed by the best available data. The Moore-Miller Administration's top priority is keeping our communities safe. 75% of homicides in Maryland are committed with a firearm. This is a public safety and public health crisis that we must address.

Sincerely,
Myles Hicks
Deputy Legislative Officer
Office of the Governor