



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of - SB 475- Center for Firearm Violence Prevention - Establishment

TO: Senator William Smith, Chair and  
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
FROM: Ken Shilling, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate  
DATE: February 29, 2024

In my faith tradition, I know that my conscience will not be quieted by anything less than truth and justice. Gun violence is a public health epidemic in this country that extracts a financial burden of \$10.5 billion annually on Maryland alone.

Even though Maryland is 8th in the country for legislation on gun violence prevention, we are still average with regard to the number of deaths from gun violence. Unfortunately, even when we do things like ban “bump stocks” or “automatic weapons,” manufacturers can bypass the intent of our gun law by designing new parts that are not banned. In state buy-back programs, companies can destroy the parts with serial numbers, and resell the remaining parts as a “ghost gun kit,” which we banned in 2022.

Therefore, we must enhance the effectiveness of the enforcement of our laws. We need a state-wide solution; one that will facilitate data collection and research to provide impactful solutions.

SB 475 provides for the establishment of the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention in the Maryland Department of Health. It will implement a holistic public health approach to firearm violence reduction.

SB 475 will foster collaboration between law enforcement and community-based programs. The new Center will develop best practices for scaling community intervention programs. It will educate the public on issues that can prevent gun violence.

We all have a moral duty to provide for public safety. Let us act together in Love. We urge a favorable report on SB 475.

*Ken Shilling*

UULM-MD Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate