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February 14, 2024

TO: The Honorable Pam Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee

FROM: Tiffany Johnson Clark
Chief, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 475 – Center for Firearm Prevention – Establishment – **Support**

The Office of the Attorney General requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 475. Senate Bill 475 – Center for Firearm Prevention - Establishment, an Administration bill, establishes the Center of Firearm Violence Prevention in the Maryland Department of Health to reduce firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in the State by taking a public health approach to firearm violence reduction.

According to the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions, Maryland has the tenth highest gun homicide and assault rate in the United States. Each year, gun violence in Maryland causes approximately 474 deaths and 551 injuries. Gun violence tends to be concentrated among a small number of people living in overburdened and underserved communities. These individuals are often caught in cycles of victimization, trauma, and retaliatory violence equities. Senate Bill 475 requires the newly established Center to solicit and consider recommendations from communities that are disproportionately impacted by gun violence. Up until recently, this part of the equation to curbing gun violence in communities has been lacking. To address violence in the most impacted communities, it is critically important to understand the root of the problem from those who are most impacted by it.

Taking a public health approach to gun violence prevention in communities is imperative because it affects everyone in the community – not just the shooters and victims. In September 2023, President Biden established the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention to reduce gun violence. It is a national epidemic in our nation.

Information is key to prevention. We cannot effectively combat firearm violence without understanding when, where, and how firearm crimes occur. Knowing who is committing firearm crimes and where firearms are being introduced into the community will allow us as a State to target preventative initiatives appropriately.

For the foregoing reasons the Office of the Attorney General requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 475.

cc: Governor's Legislative Office
Finance Committee Members