



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 471

February 9, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 471– Criminal Procedure - Victim Compensation - Alterations
Victim Compensation Reform Act of 2024

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 471.

SB 471 addresses gaps in the victim compensation process to provide crucial support for crime victims and family members of homicide victims when it is most needed. This legislation will make victim compensation more inclusive and better meet the needs of victims across the state by removing barriers to financial relief, and increasing the amount of funds available, for expenses incurred as a result of violent crime.

This bill increases the funds available under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) for assistance with victimization-related expenses including funeral and burial costs, repair funds for property damage, crime scene cleanup, mental health counseling and medical care. Maryland has one of the lowest victim compensation grant rates in the country, with over 60% of all claims denied as ineligible or closed without any compensation in FY23. SB 471 also streamlines the compensation process to reduce the significant delays that applicants currently experience.

SB 471 takes important steps to remedy inequities in the current victim compensation process, which disproportionately disqualifies Black male and youth applicants – who are the most frequent victims of violence. The bill removes a number of barriers to victim eligibility for compensation, including the requirements that a victim report a crime to law enforcement within 48 hours and cooperate with law enforcement. This legislation also changes the composition of the CICB to ensure there are members who work directly with victims, live in a high violence community, and/or are family of a homicide victim.

In helping to stabilize victims and their families immediately following violent trauma, SB 471 will contribute to increased public safety overall.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 471.