

Testimony for SB471 Victim Compensation -Alterations (Victim Compensation Reform Act of 2024)

Testimony Submitted by: Dr. Deborah G. Haskins, mother of 2013 Baltimore City Homicidal Victim Joseph F. Haskins (deceased 5/9/13) and aunt of 2014 Baltimore County Homicidal Victim Reuben C. Haskins (11/14/2014). I am a resident of Baltimore City (Delegate Attar district).

Good afternoon Delegate Clippinger and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you Gov. Moore for your commitment to reforming this Bill.

My name is Dr. Deborah G. Haskins. I am a lifelong resident of Baltimore City. Today, I am here representing our son Joseph “JoJo” and our nephew Reuben Haskins. They are not homicide numbers—they are loved, they have families, had dreams. I represent ALL families affected by criminal injuries.

I thought homicide happened to other people until it happened to us!

In the State of Maryland, there is a lack of advocacy for criminal injuries assistance. How do I know? We were not contacted by the State until **5 years later!** I learned from another mom of a murdered daughter whose son played basketball with JoJo.

The proposed Bill will overhaul needed changes! First, we must expand who qualifies. His fiancé, stepson, and JoJo and Reuben’s siblings did not qualify. JoJo’s daughter, 2 months at the time, would never know her father except through our sharing. My husband’s heart was murdered and he died of collateral damage of criminal injuries in 2016.

Second, the current law provides up to 3 years of counseling and capped. It is a REIMBURSEMENT MODEL! This is unacceptable. The current law discriminates against persons who have limited material resources to first pay for counseling and then wait to get their money back. It took 8 months to be reimbursed! We gave up.

I am asking that you please vote a **favorable report** for this bill reform so that EVERY VICTIM in Maryland can get compassionate care right from the start. Allowing them to breathe with the support available in their communities without searching. We become a state and a world of more people who love and who learn to live and love again. My prayer is that every victim of a criminal injury sees Maryland as a State of hope and healing. Thank you!