



University of Maryland Medical Center
R Adams Crowley Shock Trauma Center
Center for Injury Prevention & Policy
22 South Greene Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

February 6, 2024

**Written Testimony in Support (FAV) of House Bill 575
Criminal Procedure- Victim Compensation Alterations (Victim Compensation Reform Act of 2024)
Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

My name is Ja’Nae Elder and I am a Violence Prevention Specialist at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, located in Baltimore, Maryland. I am writing today in support of House Bill 575. This bill is a reminder that making alterations to bills for crime victims is not just about the legal statutes; it's about affirming their dignity, restoring their sense of security, and empowering them on their journey toward healing. Victims of crime are not just statistics; they are individuals whose lives have been changed. The alterations of House Bill 575 prioritize their needs and send a powerful message: you are seen, you are heard, and you matter.

The Violence Prevention Program at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center is determined to reduce the frequency and severity of recidivism for violent injury and criminal activity among persons living in and around Baltimore City. Victims of violent crime often face numerous barriers that can impede their ability to recover and seek justice. These barriers can vary depending on the nature of the crime, the social and cultural context, and the resources available to the victim. The revisions to this bill are indeed promising, particularly in their enhancement of funding for mental health services. The increase from \$10,000 to \$45,000 for each claimant underscores the recognition of the critical role mental health support plays in the recovery process for victims of crime. Furthermore, the bill's adjustment to increase funding from \$250 to \$2,000 for repair, replacement, or cleaning of property damaged due to a crime or law enforcement investigation, including the cost of replacing locks, reflects a practical response to the

tangible effects of victimization. These adjustments demonstrate a commitment to providing comprehensive assistance to individuals affected by crime, addressing both their emotional well-being and practical needs resulting from such incidents.

House Bill 575 will continue to help alleviate financial burdens, validate victims' experiences, and contribute to the overall well-being of victims and communities alike. It is for that reason that by continuing to support victims in their recovery with these alterations and addressing the immediate aftermath of crime, victim compensation programs will contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities. More importantly, it plays a crucial role in the transition from victimhood to survivorship and reminds us that it's a journey that requires empathy, understanding, and comprehensive support systems. By acknowledging the needs of crime victims and working to address them through legal and social mechanisms, we can foster resiliency, restore dignity, and contribute to the healing process. The scars left by crime may be visible, but their pain is real. Let us be agents of healing and hope for those who carry these burdens and support House Bill 575. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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