



**Memorandum of Support**  
**HB575/SB471**  
**Criminal Procedure - Victim Compensation – Alterations**  
**Victim Compensation Reform Act of 2024**

Thank you, Speaker of the House and members of the committee,

Community Justice strongly supports the immediate passage of **HB575/SB471**. Community Justice works to end gun violence by empowering those closest to the pain to advance life-saving solutions. We see gun violence as a public health crisis, and we are advocating for a public health approach that centers communities directly impacted by this crisis and implements evidence-informed strategies to intervene and prevent violence.

[In Maryland, an average year, 796 people die and 1,363 are wounded by guns.](#) Gun violence is now the leading cause of [premature death for all youth](#) and Black men in America. Despite this fact, Maryland has one of the lowest grant rates of victim compensation in the country. Over 60% of all claims were denied victim compensation in Maryland as ineligible or closed without any compensation in FY23, with no victim of domestic violence-related crimes awarded compensation.

HB 575/SB 471 removes numerous requirements that bar victims from eligibility for victim compensation, including the requirements that a victim must report a crime to law enforcement within 48 hours and that a victim must cooperate with law enforcement. It also helps clarify and expand which relatives are eligible to receive compensation and what types of expenses are eligible for reimbursement to reflect family structures and the needs of victims more accurately. The bill also strikes the concept of the “perfect victim” who may have “contributed” to their victimization. A large body of evidence and lived experience demonstrates this has not been effective at helping people heal and preventing future victimization; rather, it has too often exacerbated the trauma victims experience in the aftermath of violent crime. This bill reconstitutes the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to include more members with lived experience and those who work directly with victims.

Those impacted by violence should be a priority and not an afterthought. We also know that investing in victim services reduces the likelihood of recycling violence. Currently, 40% of survivors in America will commit firearm violence, or be shot by someone else within five years, and this creates a deadly cycle of violence. Investing in victims' services is not only the right thing to do but reduces the number of future acts of violence.

Community Justice urges the legislature to advance **HB575/SB471**. This bill will create a non-discriminatory victim compensation process that is accessible to all victims of crime, or their family members left behind. It will provide prompt and crucial financial support when it's needed most, and remove unnecessary and arbitrary denials of financial relief for victims of crimes. Let's make Maryland's victim compensation program accessible by passing this legislation.

Tarria Stanley, Regional Advocacy Manager, Community Justice