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## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1267**

March 6, 2024

Bethany Young, Director of Policy and Legislation

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy's (GOCPP) role is to advise the Governor on criminal justice strategies, coordinate across public safety agencies, and allocate resources Statewide to support public safety.

House Bill 1267 adds researchers affiliated with institutions of higher education as an entity able to review extreme risk protection order (ERPO) petitions. With specified exceptions, court records relating to a petition for an extreme risk protective order are confidential, and the contents may not be divulged, by subpoena or otherwise, except by order of the court on good cause shown. Maryland law currently limits researchers' ability to answer questions about the implementation and impact of ERPOs in the State. At this time, Maryland ERPO data is limited to the number of ERPOs filed, the number of hearings held, and the number of orders granted, leaving many questions unanswered.

HB1267 will allow researchers to distill important data to inform the State's gun violence policy and practice, particularly gun violence related to domestic violence and behavioral health crises. Without this change in the law, Maryland will not have the benefit of research to inform important questions about how ERPOs are being used and their impact.

Maryland recently was awarded a \$5.1 million Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (Byrne SCIP) grant to support various projects or initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence at the intersections of domestic violence and behavioral health. The increased access to ERPO data under HB1267 will be a critical component of Maryland's work under Byrne SCIP.

**GOCPP urges the House Judiciary Committee to favorably report on House Bill 1267.**