

SB 188 - MML - FAV.pdf

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Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

January 29, 2025

Committee: Senate Budget & Taxation

Bill: SB 188 - Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund - Alterations

Position: Support

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) respectfully supports Senate Bill 188, which aims to make our communities safer and healthier through changes to the Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program.

The goal of the Program is the improvement of Main Street communities and other community development nonprofit organizations. Grants can be used for surveillance tools like streetlights and cameras; pedestrian and traffic calming devices; landscaping and restaurant expansion; and other improvements that improve public spaces and remove blight. Under current law, local governments are limited to only facility and community investment projects (between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per project application) and business district and neighborhood security projects (between \$75,000 and \$150,000 per project application). Under the bill, local governments are eligible applicants for any project type and without a limit on grant awards per application. Expanding our access to these targeted funds can help local governments continue to strengthen our communities, increasing both safety and economic development.

For these reasons, the Maryland Municipal League respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 188. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy & Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.

SB188_DHCD_SUPPORT.pdf

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DATE: January 28, 2025

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 188

TITLE: Community Health and Safety Works Grand Program and Fund - Alterations

COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

SB 188 makes alterations to the Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program to align with how the program is currently deployed. These changes are in the following areas: eligible project types; eligible applicants; requirements for the purchase or installation of license readers; repealing certain requirements for projects related to camera networks; repealing minimum and maximum grant amounts; and, expanding the authorized uses of the Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program Fund to include certain administrative and operating expenses of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Background and Analysis:

Launched in FY22 by DHCD, the Community Health and Safety Works program (CHSW) provides grant opportunities to Maryland communities through targeted investments in the physical environment that improve health and safety. The first two rounds of CHSW were funded at \$10 million each using American Rescue Plan Act funds. The third round was deployed in FY24 and supported by \$10 million in State General Funds.

In this most recent FY24 round, the program expanded the eligibility of applicants to local governments and anchor institutions in addition to tax-exempt non-profit organizations and broadened the eligible project types to include place-based projects that improve community safety and reduce environmental harm.

The Community Health and Safety Works program was codified in the 2024 legislative session. The proposed alterations to the program align with current program design and allow the department to shift focus areas and funding levels as needs around violence prevention change. Alterations are further described below.

Eligible Projects

- Changes the eligible projects to: 1) Community or Business District Improvement Project; 2) Community-centered Crime and Violence Intervention and Prevention Project; and 3) other category of project identified by the Secretary of DHCD as a recognized crime prevention strategy designed to address environmental, health or safety concerns in commercial, public or residential areas.
- The Community or Business District Improvement Project category is the combination of the former Facility and Community Improvement Project and Business District and Neighborhood Security Project into one project category. The new project type still allows for facility improvements but requires applicants to demonstrate that the facility improvements align with community goals and improve community safety.

- The Community-centered Crime and Violence Intervention and Prevention Project category remains the same. And, the Secretary of DHCD may identify other eligible projects so the department can address a pressing environmental, safety or health issue not anticipated when the bill was codified.

Allowable Uses

- Expands the uses of the new Community or Business District Improvement Project category to include projects that: reduce harm from the urban heat island effect and other impacts of climate change; eliminate illegal dumping of trash that create a community nuisance and can signal that an area is unsafe; and/or mitigate traffic hazards that cause pedestrian or cyclist injury or death. These changes align with current program design. Traffic calming measures that increase pedestrian safety support Maryland's Vision Zero efforts to prevent injuries from motor vehicle crashes and help communities create safe, walkable neighborhoods and downtowns.
- Allows for equipment to clean and maintain open spaces as well as contracting local private security services or similar community-based programs with a specific emphasis on the de-escalation of violent behavior. Communities, particularly in Baltimore City, cite these services as successful in reducing conflict and violence. Examples include Rose Street Community Center in East Baltimore and the PEACE Team in West Baltimore.
- Continues to fund security cameras but removes the requirement to submit evidence of a partnership with law enforcement, the governmental unit responsible for traffic enforcement for the political subdivision, and any other relevant public agencies. Many communities apply for cameras to be installed on privately owned homes and businesses, which are monitored by the businesses and residents and do not require a partnership with law enforcement to install and maintain. In Baltimore City applicants are encouraged to register private cameras with the city's Community CitiWatch Partnership, a registry of private surveillance systems where residents can securely submit video evidence to the police when a crime occurs nearby. When requested by local governments, DHCD can require applicants to complete certain permission forms as part of the grant application, as the department has done when projects are located on land owned by DNR or Baltimore City Recreation and Parks.
- Continues to fund license plate readers and requires evidence of partnership with law enforcement because the readers connect to law enforcement databases and identify vehicles wanted in connection with a crime.

Eligible Applicants

- Allows governmental units and institutions of higher education in collaboration with a local neighborhood association to apply for all project types in addition to tax-exempt non-profit organizations.

Funding

- Removes the maximum and minimum grant amounts so that DHCD can adjust funding amounts as part of program design. Additionally, with limited staff capacity, it is difficult to manage and evaluate the impact of hundreds of small dollar awards per funding round.
- Expands uses of the Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program Fund to include certain administrative and operating expenses of DHCD in addition to providing grants for eligible applicants. This revision allows the department to receive modest funding for necessary operating expenses to deploy the program, including: review



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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of applications; coordination of grant agreements in a timely manner; collection and review of funding progress reports; and evaluation of the community impact of awards.

CHSW enhances the quality of life of targeted disinvested communities by strategically investing in locally-led community health and safety strategies. Below are examples of funded projects.

County Commissioners of Queen Anne's County; FY23, \$50,000

The \$50,000 CHSW grant played a key role in mitigating traffic harm in the Stevensville Arts & Entertainment District's traffic mitigation efforts in partnership with the Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Office, Parks Department, Planning & Zoning and Public Works. The grant funded the public art and safety signage to reduce speeds and raise awareness for pedestrian safety.

Cumberland; FY23, \$50,000

Critical measures were needed to combat crime and maximize the impact of the newly refurbished pedestrian mall to ensure the district continues to thrive and grow without concerns about safety for local citizens and visitors. The camera program funded by CHSW provided 60 cameras to businesses, complementing downtown investments and adding extra security and a sense of protection to encourage visitors to shop.

Ocean City; FY24, \$99,000

Ocean City is one of the state's most popular tourist destinations. Year-round residency of less than 7,000 swells to upwards of 300,000 in the summer season. During these busy months, Ocean City becomes Maryland's second largest municipality. Despite the fun and carefree environment, crime persists as an issue. CHSW funding supported CityWatch cameras around portions of the Boardwalk and surrounding area. CityWatch cameras have played an integral part in identifying and addressing threats to public safety.

Greater Baybrook Alliance; FY23, \$100,000

This grant funded the continuation of GBA's Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) program, which was piloted through the first round of CHSW funding. The program addresses targeted hot spots characterized by conditions that facilitate violence: high numbers of vacant properties, vacant lots, and unmanaged alleys on or adjacent to our commercial corridors. This distressed environment allows for negative use of public spaces, depresses positive economic activity for existing businesses and creates challenges for attracting new businesses. CPTED interventions include installing fencing, windows, and doors; exterior power washing/painting; lighting and cameras; and/or landscaping. Interventions will secure properties, improve sightlines, and signal control of space.

Southeast Community Development Corporation; FY24, \$100,000

This is a continuation of an FY23-funded CHSW project that engages the Rose Street Community Center to provide cleaning services and violence mediation in the Ellwood Park community. Rose Street's model of employing at-risk residents to clean blocks and alleys helps reduce blight, decrease violence, and improve perceptions of safety in the neighborhood. The crew leaders talk with members throughout the day about any tensions in the community, and they host informal and formal conflict mediations as needed. Since Rose Street's engagement, homicides are down and reports of illegal dumping, rats, and trash have declined. During that time, the number of "bulk pickups" scheduled increased, demonstrating that more residents are appropriately using City services to dispose of bulk trash.

DHCD Position

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 188.



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LBH FAV SB188-Community Health and Safety Works Gr

Uploaded by: Jennifer Witten

Position: FAV



Date: January 29, 2024

To: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Committee Members Senate Budget and Tax Committee

Reference: SB188-Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund – Alterations

Position: Support

Dear Chair, Guzzone and Committee Members,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on SB188. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County; Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours Hospital), a freestanding medical facility in West Baltimore; and Center for Hope a center of excellence focused on provided hope and services for trauma survivors in Baltimore City.

LifeBridge Health's relationship with their nearby communities has always been at the forefront. Now more than ever, partnering with our neighbors to address social determinants of health – good schools, safe neighborhoods, effective transportation, decent housing, and a green, healthy environment, among other factors impact our communities' health fit squarely into our objectives. Investments through MD DHCD's Community Health and Safety Works grants have a strong record of improving the livability and economic potential in our catchment areas.

LifeBridge health is proud to partner with our surrounding communities to advocate on behalf of shared interests, build organizational capacity and access financial resources. In this past cycle alone, we served as a conduit to \$1.6 million in SEED funding for five organizations in Park Heights and Southwest Baltimore. These funds will support our partners in critical efforts that make neighborhoods safer and stronger. Sinai Hospital is also playing a key role in the work of the Pimlico Community Advisory Board, a collaborative designed to lift the voice of communities surrounding the Pimlico Racetrack and ensuring that the state's investment also benefits our surrounding neighbors. Additionally, we are a founding member of the Northwest Baltimore Partnership a coalition of community associations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, government agencies, and faith-based institutions working collaboratively to strengthen Northwest Baltimore from Park Circle to Pikesville.

The expansion of the eligible programs to include strategies in reducing violence is critical. When our health system surveys community members, gun violence comes in as one of their top concerns. We recognize the advantages of prevention over treatment for conditions like cancer and diabetes. At LifeBridge Health, we are similarly seeing positive results when taking the same public health approach to gun violence.

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Our violence interrupters, working in conjunction with our hospital violence intervention teams and case management services, have created a network that extends beyond the immediate crisis. Community events and resources have played a vital role in fostering trust and cooperation among residents. This comprehensive approach has contributed to the reduction of gunshot wound admissions at Sinai Hospital's emergency department by 42% since 2020. This year, we are on track to have fewer than one hundred gunshot wound admissions for the first time since 2014.

For these reasons we would ask the committee for a Favorable vote for SB188.

For more information, please contact:

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UNFAVORABLE.SB188.HB172.MDRTL.LauraBogley.pdf

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UNFAVORABLE- SEEKING AMENDMENT

SB188/HB172

Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund - Alterations

Laura Bogley, JD, Executive Director

Maryland Right to Life

On behalf of our Board of Directors and members across the state, we object to provisions of this bill that without amendment could be used to appropriate additional public grant funds to further subsidize the multi-billion dollar abortion industry. We strongly oppose the use of public funds for corporate abortion welfare or to cover costs for abortion facility infrastructure, including cameras, lighting and other clinic improvements under the guise of “public safety”.

70% of Violence Committed by Abortion Rights Activists

In 2024, the General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 975 to provide millions of dollars in public safety grants to abortion facilities under the false premise and defamatory claims that abortion facilities in Maryland are facing increased threats of violence from anti-abortion “terrorists” and therefore require millions in taxpayer subsidies to enhance facility security.

The Assembly disregarded testimony from Maryland Right to Life that informed you that FBI Director Christopher Wray testified before Congress that roughly 70% of the cases of abortion related violence or threats of violence were perpetrated by pro-abortion assailants against pro-life victims. (<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/2878435/seventy-percent-of-fbis-abortion-related-violence-cases-have-anti-abortion-victims-since-dobbs-wray/>)

In Maryland, the truth is that pro-abortion extremists have committed escalating acts of violence and vandalism against pro-life citizens and pregnancy resource centers since the Supreme Court’s 2022 reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. At least 6 (six) physical assaults against pro-life citizens in Maryland have been reported to police since 2022 including three incidents of vandalism against pregnancy resource centers. **(See attachment).**

At least 100 pregnancy resource centers and pro-life groups nationwide have been attacked and vandalized since the *Dobb*’s leak in early May 2022. Pro-abortion domestic terrorists have claimed responsibility, and delivered on their promise of a “summer of rage”. The violent crimes against people practicing the tenets of their faith should be properly classified as hate crimes and prosecuted accordingly.

Despite these facts and the dire women’s health statistics in Maryland, the State continues to sponsor the abortion monopoly thereby depriving women equal access to legitimate reproductive healthcare. The state of Maryland has no legal obligation to fund abortions or to subsidize the abortion industry. If the state elects to do so, it must provide equal appropriations for infrastructure improvements to pro-life pregnancy resource centers, churches and community-based organizations that provide abortion alternatives to women who deserve the option to choose life for their children.

The State is Failing to Provide Equal Protection

These documented attacks against pro-life citizens in Maryland should be properly classified as hate crimes and added to the Maryland State Police *Hate Bias Report*, as the victims were peacefully practicing the tenets of their Christian faith. But to date, the state has failed to charge or prosecute any pro-abortion assailants, even known assailants identified by photographic evidence. A longstanding principle of American jurisprudence, which has biblical roots is the phrase popularized by William E. Gladstone “*justice delayed is justice denied*” and indeed justice has been denied to pro-life citizens by the state of Maryland.

Similarly, in December 2023, members of Congress have challenged Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke over her department’s allegedly discriminatory practices during a House Judiciary Committee hearing. Congressman Chip Roy, R-TX, a former U.S. attorney, questioned Clarke’s and the rest of the Biden administration’s interpretation of the controversial **Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act**. He noted that this law “**protects abortion clinics, pregnancy resource centers, and houses of worship alike.**” “However,” he continued, “the division of prosecution under the FACE Act shows a significant bias toward prosecuting FACE Act violations involving abortion clinics.” In making this point, Roy specifically referenced the case of pro-life activist [Mark Houck](#), who sued the Biden Department of Justice. (<https://catholicvote.org/house-judiciary-committee-confronts-biden-appointee-over-face-act/>)

Congressman Roy stated that the leak of the Supreme Court’s draft *Dobbs* decision “gave rise to widespread demonstrations and attacks on pro-life facilities.” He also stated “In fact following the leak, more than a hundred pro-life facilities were vandalized or damaged including by arson,” he said. “Two hundred eighteen Catholic churches have been attacked” since the *Dobbs* leak, Roy added, citing Catholic Vote’s [violence tracker](#).

Maryland is State Sponsor of Corporate Abortion

Abortion is big business in Maryland. Maryland taxpayers subsidize the abortion industry in Maryland through direct Maryland Medicaid reimbursements to abortion providers for thousands of elective abortions, through various state grants and contracts, and through pass-through funding in various state programs. Health insurance carriers are required to fully cover abortion violence to participate with the Maryland Health Choice program.

Programs that utilize public funding for abortion, abortion providers or promotion and other abortion-related activities include the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Family Planning Program, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the Children’s Cabinet, Maryland Council on School Based Health Centers, Maryland Assembly for the Advancement of School Based Health, Community Health Resource Commission, Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP), Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund and others.

No Public Funding- Maryland is one of only 4 states that forces taxpayers to fund abortions. Medicaid funding for abortion was intended to be limited to cases of rape, incest or to save the physical life of the mother but out of 11,567 abortions paid for in 2022, less than 10 were for these authorized reasons and the vast majority were elective (non-medical) abortions.

There is bi-partisan unity on prohibiting the use of taxpayer funding for abortion. 60% percent of those surveyed in a January 2023 Marist poll say they oppose tax payer funding of abortion. 80% of Americans polled favor laws that protect both the lives of women and unborn children. Public funds should not be diverted from but prioritized for health and family planning services which have the objective of saving the lives of both mothers and children, including programs for improving maternal health and birth and delivery outcomes, well baby care, parenting classes, foster care reform and affordable adoption programs.

Funding Restrictions are Constitutional- The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and held that there is no right to abortion found in the Constitution of the United States. As early as 1980 the Supreme Court affirmed in *Harris v. McRae*, that *Roe* had created a limitation on government, not a government funding entitlement. The Court ruled that the government may distinguish between abortion and other procedures in funding decisions -- noting that “*no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life*”, and held that there is “*no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.*”

State is Failing Pregnant Women

Paradoxically, the state ranks among the worst in the nation for infant mortality, preterm birth rates, and has seen a rise in severe maternal morbidity since 2019. Women in underserved communities lack access to high-risk obstetric care, face challenges in obtaining mental and behavioral health services, experience increased rates of substance abuse and overdose, and are deprived of essential perinatal education for healthy pregnancies.

The Maryland Department of Health has consistently failed to meet the needs of pregnant women and families in Maryland and appropriations should be withheld until the Department provides the annual report to the Centers for Disease Control to measure the number of abortions committed each year in Maryland, abortion reasons, funding sources and related health complications or injuries.

- The Department has routinely failed to enforce existing state health and safety regulations of abortion clinics, even after two women were near fatally injured in botched abortions.
- The Department has routinely failed to provide women with information and access to abortion alternatives, including the Maryland Safe Haven Program (see Department of Human Services), affordable adoption programs or referral to quality prenatal care and family planning services that do not promote abortion.
- The Department has demonstrated systemic bias in favor of abortion providers, engaging in active partnerships with Planned Parenthood and other abortion organizations to develop and implement public programs, curriculum and training. In doing so the Department is failing to provide medically accurate information on pregnancy and abortion.
- The Department systemically discriminates against any reproductive health and educational providers who are unwilling to promote abortion and in doing so, suppresses pro-life speech and action in community-based programs and public education.
- The Department fails to collect, aggregate and report data about abortion and the correlation

between abortion and maternal mortality, maternal injury, subsequent pre-term birth, miscarriage and infertility.

- The Department is failing to protect the Constitutionally-guaranteed rights of freedom of conscience and religion for health care workers, contributing to the scarcity of medical professions and personnel in Maryland.
- The Department is failing to protect women and girls from sexual abuse and sex trafficking by waiving reporting requirements for abortionists, waiving mandatory reporter requirements for abortionists, and failing to regulate abortion practices.

Abortion is not Healthcare—Pregnancy is not a disease and abortion is NOT healthcare and is never medically necessary. Abortion is the intentional, violent destruction of a developing human being. Abortion always kills a human child and often causes physical and psychological injury to women. Abortion is the exploitation of women and girls and enables sexual abusers and sex traffickers to continue in the course of their crimes and victimization. Abortion providers who are mandatory reporters under the law, refuse to report to law enforcement suspected cases of rape or abuse.

The fact that 85% of OB-GYNs in a representative national survey will not participate in abortions is glaring evidence that abortion is not an essential part of women's healthcare. Women have better options for family planning and well woman care, in fact there are 14 federally qualifying health centers for each Planned Parenthood in Maryland.

Abortion is never medically necessary to save the life of a woman - In the rare case of severe pregnancy complications, hospitals, not abortion clinics, may decide to separate the mother and child and make best efforts to sustain the lives of both. This is different from an abortion, which involves the purposeful termination of fetal human life. Prior to the Supreme Court's imposition of their decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the Maryland legislature had enacted a ban on abortion and only would allow exception for the physical life of the mother, if two physicians agreed that termination of the pregnancy was necessary to avoid the imminent death of the mother. Science has advanced beyond this point to support that both lives can be saved.

Disparate Impact Statement - Abortion is Black Genocide- Abortion has reached epidemic proportions among people of color with half of all pregnancies of Black women ending in abortion. It is believed that nearly half of all pregnancies of Black women end in abortion. As a result, Black Americans are no longer the leading minority population, dropping second to the Hispanic population. People of color have long been targeted for elimination through sterilization and abortion by eugenicists like Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger. Even today, 78% of abortion clinics are located in Minority communities. As a result abortion has become the leading killer of Black lives. Abortion is the greatest human and civil rights abuse of our time and as a civilized people we cannot continue to justify or subsidize this genocide. For more information please see www.BlackGenocide.org.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your amendment of this bill, to appropriately prioritize the use of public safety grant monies for legitimate community safety needs, rather than to serve as additional corporate welfare to the abortion industry.

The evidence does not support the false argument that abortion clinics are under increasing threats of violence in Maryland. To the contrary, it is pro-life pregnancy resource centers which are under attack and need your protection.

REPORTED ACTS OF PRO-ABORTION VIOLENCE OR VANDALISM IN MARYLAND SINCE 2022

MAY 1, 2022

BALTIMORE COUNTY

Alpha Pregnancy Center, a faith-based pregnancy resource center in Reisterstown, Maryland was vandalized including being spray painted with the words "If Abortions aren't safe, then neither are you". Pro-abortion domestic terrorism group Jane's Revenge took credit for the vandalism but no prosecutions have been initiated.

MAY 4, 2022

FREDERICK COUNTY

Care-Net of Frederick, a faith-based pregnancy resource center was vandalized and spray painted with the words "Go to Planned Parenthood instead." The center was vandalized twice previously. The cost to the center of implementing security measures was \$14,000 all paid by private donations.

MAY 8, 2022

FREDERICK COUNTY

BirthRight of Frederick Pregnancy Resource Center was vandalized with graffiti.

JUNE 2, 2022

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Nicholas John Roske made an attempt against the life of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Roske reportedly was upset about the leaked Dobbs decision. He was armed with a Glock 17 pistol, ammunition, a knife, zip ties, pepper spray and duct tape.

MAY 2023

BALTIMORE CITY

Two senior pro-life citizens were brutally beaten while praying and practicing sidewalk advocacy outside of the Planned Parenthood on N. Howard Street. Mark Crosby was beaten and kicked in the face to within an inch of his life and suffered permanent injury. Photographic evidence of the pro-abortion assailant was provided to police but no arrest has been made in the case.

JULY 8, 2023

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

83 year old pro-life citizen, Olga Fairfax, was brutally attacked while praying outside an abortion facility in Silver Spring, Maryland. A young woman repeatedly punched Olga and sprayed her skin and clothes with spray paint. Photographic evidence of the pro-abortion assailant was provided to police but no arrest has been made in the case.



Mark Crosby was brutally beaten while praying outside the Baltimore City Planned Parenthood.



Police were provided with video evidence of the abortion terrorist. An arrest has been made.