



TESTIMONY FOR HB0180

Public Safety - Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program - Establishment

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Addison

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0180 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Gun violence in Maryland is a pressing issue. In 2023 alone, an estimated 737 people lost their lives to gun-related injuries, including homicides, suicides, accidents, and other incidents (USAFACTS.org). Since 1982, there have been 10 mass shootings in the state (statista.com).

HB0180 is a pivotal piece of legislation that aims to establish and fund Gun Violence Victim Relocation Program within the Victim Services Unit of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. The Program will provide essential assistance to eligible victims, including:

- Relocating the victim and their family to a safe location.
- Providing financial assistance for moving expenses, security deposits, and rent.
- Offering a range of support services, such as counseling, legal assistance, job training, and resources for individuals with disabilities.
- Collaborating with other agencies to deliver comprehensive, wrap-around services.

Despite the broad scope of this mission, the legislation sets forth reasonable eligibility parameters. An individual is eligible for the program if they are a victim of gun violence in Maryland and can demonstrate a need to be relocated for their safety or their family's safety. Importantly, the Victim Services Unit cannot accept individuals suspected of perpetrating the violence into the program.

MLC is dedicated to supporting legislation that is socially beneficial. Providing victims of gun violence in Maryland with relocation services and assistance addresses several critical social issues:

- Immediate and ongoing threats to the safety of gun violence victims. Severe psychological impacts experienced by those who have encountered gun violence.
- The need for victims to reconnect with or establish support networks, including family, friends,

and community organizations.

- The opportunity for victims to escape environments where violence is prevalent, reducing the likelihood of recurrent incidents and breaking the cycle of violence.

Offering these relocation services ensures that victims and their families can rebuild their lives in a secure and supportive environment, while providing a much-needed source of comfort to those, like many in our organization, who fear such tragedies.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition wholeheartedly supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.