



Date: February 13, 2025

To: Ways n Means Committee

Reference: House Bill 387-Comprehensive community Safety Funding Act

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair, Atterbeary and Distinguished Committee Members,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health's Center for Hope we thank you for this opportunity to provide comments and urge your support for House Bill 387. Center for Hope annually provides intervention and prevention services for over 7,700 survivors and caregivers impacted by child abuse, domestic violence, community violence, and elder justice. LifeBridge Health supports the Maryland's Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act (HB387).

This smart investment is another measure that continues to ensure we are making progress in addressing violence in our communities. We have seen success in our Safe Streets programs achieving zero homicides in several of our covered communities, and at Sinai Hospital, a Level II Trauma Center, has recently seen a 52% reduction in gunshot wound admissions. We stand ready to serve those who unfortunately are impacted by violence by offering programs for children exposed to homicide. Making this act critically important are significant federal and state cuts to our victims of crime funding which threaten these efforts. Continued support and new sources of revenue is crucial.

HB387 directs new revenue to programs that are prepared to address violence via a medical intervention when needed, ensure victims of violence are supported, expand community-based violence intervention grants, implement mitigation programs, early intervention strategies that make economic sense for the state. Gun related violence cost the state of Maryland over \$9.1 billion annually.

Our ability to continue these life-saving efforts is under threat. We face significant cuts to our victims of crime funding both locally and nationally. Nationally, the Crime Victims Fund has seen a \$700 million reduction, bringing the total available funding down to \$1.2 billion. This has led to widespread concern among organizations that provide critical services to crime victims, such as domestic violence shelters and child advocacy centers. The uncertainty surrounding the new leadership in Washington only exacerbates these concerns, as future funding directions remain unclear.

In Maryland, the impact of gun violence is stark. On average, 682 people die by guns each year in our state (everytown stat). Maryland has the 35th-highest rate of gun deaths in the United States, with 59% of these deaths being homicides. Gun related homicides are the leading cause of death for kids and teens.

These statistics highlight the urgent need for continued and increased funding for violence prevention and victim support programs. And considering proposed cuts to victims' services in this year's budget, finding measures to balance those impacts are crucial. The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act aims to address these challenges by imposing an excise tax on certain gross receipts of federally licensed firearms dealers. Firearms define by reference to § 5-101 under the Public Safety Article.

This approach not only addresses the public health and financial burdens of gun violence but also ensures that resources are directed to the communities that need them most.

In conclusion, continued support and funding are crucial to maintaining and expanding our efforts to create safer communities. The success of our programs at LifeBridge Health demonstrates that with the right investment, we can make a significant difference. I urge you to support HB387 and help us build a safer, healthier future for all Maryland residents.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a favorable report for House Bill 387.

For more information, please contact:

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