

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor



DOROTHY LENNIG
Executive Director

Testimony in Support of HOUSE BILL 387

Bethany Young, Director of Policy and Legislation

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP)

February 13, 2025

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) advises the Governor on criminal justice strategies, coordinates across public safety agencies, and allocates resources statewide to support public safety. Among the resources GOCPP manages are the Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program (VIPP) and the Survivors of Homicide Grant Program (SOHG).

The Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund, authorized by §4–902 of the Public Safety Article, provides grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations to implement evidence-informed public health and public safety programs that reduce community violence. The Survivors of Homicide Grant Program, established by §11–1006 of the Criminal Procedure Article, funds programs that provide mental healthcare, legal, and other direct services to survivors of homicide victims in Maryland.

House Bill 387 would impose an 11% excise tax on the gross receipts of a federally licensed firearms dealer derived from (1) the retail sale of firearms in Maryland and (2) in the case of an out-of-state federally licensed firearms dealer, the retail sale of firearms to Maryland residents. HB387 would deposit a portion of the excise tax proceeds into the VIPP and SOHG funds.

FY25 VIPP funding supported:

- Hospital-based violence intervention programs that provide wraparound support for survivors of community violence in the six months following their injuries;
- Nonprofit-led violence interruption, youth and young adult mentorship, and reentry services;
- Local health department programs that provide safe storage tools and education, facilitate conflict resolution and mediation resources for youth, and coordinate the collection and dissemination of local gun violence data;
- Local Management Board efforts to identify youth at risk of perpetrating or becoming victims of violence and connect the youth and their families to essential services; and
- Local government-led interventions targeting individuals at the highest risk of violence.

In FY25, GOCPP received \$8,696,624 in VIPP applications and had \$4 million available to award. As a result, GOCPP had to deny or reduce the requested funding for promising violence reduction and response efforts. HB387 will make additional funding available, allowing GOCPP to offer grants to more programs and/or increase the dollar amount of awards.

FY25 SOHG funding supported:

- Programs that provide child survivors of homicide with immediate resources to promote family stabilization and case management services;
- Programs that provide survivors of homicide victims with trauma-informed mental health resources and financial assistance;
- Local gun violence prevention and response coalition-building; and
- Legal services and nursing care for survivors of homicide.

The SOHG, funded at \$500,000 in FY25, provides relatively small awards to a few organizations. Additional funding would open the grant to more applicants and/or increase the dollar amount of awards.

This legislation will expand the resources and tools available to stem the gun violence epidemic in Maryland and provide essential services and care to victims of gun violence.

GOCPP respectfully requests a favorable report on HB387.