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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB0118: Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

Good afternoon, Chairman Senator Guy Guzzone, and Vice Chairman Senator Jim Rosapepe, and the esteemed members of the Budget and Taxation Committee.

SB0118 establishes the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act, a measure designed to strengthen Maryland's response to firearm violence while investing in prevention, recovery, and community stability. This legislation creates an excise tax on gross receipts coming from the retail sale of firearms, firearm accessories, and ammunition by federally licensed firearms dealers in the State. The revenue generated will be directed toward programs that support violence prevention, victim services, trauma care, and community support initiatives.

Firearm violence continues to impact communities across Maryland. Addressing this challenge requires not only enforcement but also sustained investments in prevention, intervention, and support services. SB0118 takes a balanced approach by ensuring that a portion of the revenue generated from firearm-related sales is reinvested into programs that strengthen community safety and provide meaningful resources to those affected by violence.

Under this legislation, revenue from the tax will support several critical programs, including the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund, the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention within the Maryland Department of Health, the Coordinated Community Supports Partnership Fund, and the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program. Additional funding will support trauma physician services and the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, which provide lifesaving care to victims of violence and serious injury.

We need to uplift our institutions by directing resources toward prevention, intervention, and trauma response; SB0118 strengthens Maryland's ability to respond comprehensively to firearm violence. These investments help ensure that communities have access to programs that reduce violence, support families and survivors, and provide critical services to individuals impacted by unfortunate and traumatic events.

Importantly, the bill includes clear reporting and administrative provisions to ensure transparency and accountability in the collection and distribution of these funds. The goal is to ensure that the revenue generated is used effectively to support programs that improve public safety and community well-being across the State.

SB0118 represents a thoughtful and responsible investment in the safety and stability of Maryland communities. By supporting prevention programs, victim services, and trauma care, this legislation helps ensure that the great state of Maryland continues to prioritize both public safety and community resilience for all.

Thus, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0118 and thank you for your consideration.