

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

# CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



**Date:** March 5, 2026

**To:** House Ways and Means Committee

**Reference:** House Bill 197-Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

**Position:** Favorable

Dear Chair Wilkins, and Distinguished Committee Members:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health and the Center for Hope, we respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 197. Center for Hope annually provides prevention, intervention, and victim support services to more than 7,700 children, caregivers, and survivors impacted by child abuse, domestic violence, community violence, and elder abuse. As part of LifeBridge Health, we also see firsthand the devastating clinical and financial toll violence takes on our communities and healthcare system.

HB197 is particularly important within the context of this year's newly adopted tax structure. As the State implements revenue reforms designed to stabilize Maryland's long-term fiscal outlook, it is critical that new and dedicated revenue streams are structured to support public safety and violence prevention efforts that reduce downstream costs. Smart tax policy should not only balance budgets but also mitigate preventable public expenditures—particularly those driven by violence and trauma.

The fiscal impact of gun violence alone exceeds \$9.1 billion annually in Maryland. At Sinai Hospital, a Level II Trauma Center within LifeBridge Health, we have seen measurable progress through sustained investment in hospital-based violence intervention and community partnerships, including a 52% reduction in gunshot wound admissions in recent years. In several Safe Streets communities we support, zero homicides have been achieved during program coverage periods. These outcomes demonstrate that targeted, sustained funding works. However, our ability to continue these efforts is increasingly strained. The federal Crime Victims Fund has experienced a \$700 million reduction, decreasing total available funding to approximately \$1.2 billion. At the state level, proposed budget constraints further threaten victim services, domestic violence programs, and child advocacy centers. Without stable funding mechanisms aligned with Maryland's revised tax framework, these essential services remain vulnerable.

HB197 represents a policy approach that aligns revenue generation with measurable public safety outcomes. By directing resources toward evidence-based violence intervention, victim services, and community-based prevention strategies, the State can reduce healthcare utilization, criminal justice expenditures, and long-term social service costs. This is fiscally responsible policy that recognizes violence as both a public health issue and an economic burden. According to the Maryland Department of Health, in 2025 there were reported 603 gun-related deaths and 644 non-fatal injuries. Gun violence remains a leading cause of death for children and teens. These statistics underscore the urgency of sustained investment. HB197 ensures that as Maryland modernizes its tax structure, it also modernizes its approach to community safety—creating a stable funding pathway for programs that demonstrably reduce harm and generate long-term savings. **For these reasons, LifeBridge Health and the Center for Hope respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 197.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
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