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*Legislative District 14*  
Montgomery County

Ways and Means Committee

*Chair*

Child Care Subcommittee

Early Childhood and  
Special Education Subcommittee



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 197 - Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act**  
**March 5th, 2026**

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee, I humbly come before you today to offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 197: The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act**.

On October 6, 2020, my father was shot randomly in his car in Washington D.C. I am grateful to the wonderful team at the George Washington University Hospital - Trauma Center for healing him, but the emotional trauma to my father and our family remained. The emotional damage inflicted on him and my family required healing from the community.

The emotional trauma inflicted in Montgomery County's Thomas S. Wootton High School, following a school shooting in February 2026, was a recent reminder of how the trauma of gun violence impacts a community at large— from the students, faculty, families and all the health care providers that played a role in addressing and treating the violence.

**The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** embodies a holistic approach to gun violence treatment and prevention – addressing the root causes of gun violence while treating both the victim and their family.

Gun violence is a public health crisis that demands urgent and decisive action. It continues to devastate marginalized communities and remains the number one cause of death for young adults aged 15-34 in Maryland. According to [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#), Prince George's County and Baltimore City, two regions with some of the highest counts of

black Marylanders, experience the highest rates of homicide and suicide via firearm than the rest of Maryland combined annually (~700 to ~1,000 per 100,000 people respectively).

Thankfully, we have had great progress across Maryland in reducing gun violence cases through our existing resources that tackle the root causes of crime and violence, paired with healing support systems through our trauma centers and community/family interventions. While this progress is meaningful, our firearm death and injury rates remain far too high to be considered acceptable. To ensure a safer Maryland and continue the success of these programs, we must secure sustainable funding through new revenue streams. Addressing the treatment and prevention of gun violence, along with the trauma on our children, families and communities is worth all the resources we can offer.

**The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** establishes an 11% excise tax on the gross receipts of a federally licensed firearms dealer derived from sales of firearms, accessories and ammunition in Maryland. Specific accessories under this excise tax include magazines & magazine loaders, firearm scopes & optics, stocks, grips, handguards, bulletproof body armor, and silencers. This excise tax applies to out-of-state firearm retailers that establish a substantial economic nexus with Maryland by either generating more than \$100,000 in gross revenue from sales into the State or conducting 200 or more separate transactions for delivery into the State during the preceding or current calendar year. This objective threshold ensures that only sellers with significant market participation in Maryland are subject to the tax, consistent with the standards already used to administer Maryland's remote sales and excise tax laws.

Maryland, like many states, already effectively utilizes taxes on alcohol, tobacco and gambling to fund state resources that successfully enables a panoply of prevention and intervention programs. They perform the vital task of disrupting the cycles of addiction that destroy families and communities. Therefore, we should be doing the same to address gun violence. According to the [National Institute of Justice in 2022](#), almost 75% of tragedies like intimate partner homicide, public shootings in our schools and places of worship and unintentional shootings have been tied to legally owned and purchased firearms. Like the countless things we have done to protect Marylanders from the public harms that secondhand smoke, alcoholism and gambling addictions

cause, creating a tax to use those resources in a similar manner is the necessary and proper thing to do. It's the responsible approach to promote public health without interfering with the right to own firearms.

In *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen* (2022), the Supreme Court confirmed the constitutionality of modern firearms regulations so long as they are “consistent with the Second Amendment’s text and historical understanding.” (*Id.* at 2131). For decades, the firearms industry has been subject to a federal level excise tax on firearms under the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, with the proceeds from that tax directed towards offsetting the harm the industry has on wildlife conservation efforts. Through its excise tax structure, **the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** was designed to conform with the legal precedent established by this longstanding law, as well as the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence.

After an era of continuous record profits from the gun industry, the **Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** redirects a portion of those profits for community well-being. The bill funds critical services addressing gun violence treatment and prevention, including:

- 20% to the coordinated Community Supports Partnership Fund;
- 4% to the Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund;
- 4% to the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical System;
- 26% to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy;
- 20% to the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program within the Governor’s Office of Crime and Prevention and Policy; and
- 26% to the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention within the Maryland Department of Health.

Gun violence, among other causes of injury that requires urgent medical attention, imposes a burdensome cost on Maryland trauma centers. Everytown for Gun Safety estimates that gun violence in Maryland costs us over \$10.5 billion per year, \$383.9 million of which is funded

entirely by taxpayer dollars.<sup>1</sup> Gunshot wounds require immediate medical attention from multiple medical specialists, meaning shock and trauma centers must pay to meet the complicated demands of countless victims each day. This additional stress on our emergency care system makes the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center one of the busiest hospitals in the state. Furthermore, the trauma patients that stay the longest are statistically those recovering from gun violence. These factors together make gun violence one of the biggest financial burdens to Maryland's premier trauma centers. **This bill** asks the firearm industry to redirect a small portion of their massive profits to shoulder some of this financial burden.

As we tackle the treatment and prevention of gun violence, we must embrace innovative, new programs and solutions. This bill also provides funding for the recently established Center for Firearm Prevention and Intervention. It has been responsible for collecting vital data insights on firearm-related fatalities, injuries and the context around homicides and suicides in Maryland. The bill would also provide funding for the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP) Fund and the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program. The VIPP Fund provides nonprofits and faith-based organizations a financial grant for the purpose of reducing gun violence in our communities. Similarly, the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program provides victim assistance, advocacy, support, and other coordinated justice system responses and ensures survivors of homicide victims are able to exercise their rights entitled by law. In 2021, Johns Hopkins published an independent study regarding the effectiveness of the VIPP Fund, stating that grantees made substantial progress in reducing violence in their respective communities, making lasting impact on countless communities. The **Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** provides enhanced financial support for these programs in their commitment to addressing both the root causes and impacts of gun violence.

On January 21, 2025, the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention was disbanded, cutting off vital federal resources devoted to gun violence prevention and intervention. As we enter an era of increased uncertainty in federal funding, creating dedicated revenue streams for gun violence prevention and intervention programs has never been more important. Federal

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<sup>1</sup> *Gun Violence in Maryland*. Everytown for Gun Safety. (2024, October). [https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Maryland\\_2024-October.pdf](https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Maryland_2024-October.pdf)

funding grants were slashed dramatically, effectively halting gun violence prevention research and programs nationally. The Trump administration has effectively terminated, redirected, or delayed more than \$1 billion in federal grants related to gun violence, public safety, mental health, and other efforts to save lives, resources that we desperately need in Maryland.

**The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act** does not seek to penalize businesses or gun owners but asks them to answer the call of responsible citizenry by contributing to the betterment of our communities. It seeks to prevent tragedies like the one that I and countless others have experienced and support our first responders and victims. It embodies an all-in community approach to addressing the trauma of gun violence.

I ask for a favorable report on **House Bill 197**.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernice Mireku-North". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honorable Bernice Mireku-North, Esq.  
Delegate. Maryland Legislative District 14  
Maryland House of Delegates