



To: The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee

From: The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 0197 – *Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act*

March 5, 2026

The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI) is proud to support House Bill 0197 to establish a sustainable funding source for violence prevention services. The HAVI represents over 70 hospital-based and hospital-linked member programs across the United States. We are proud to represent eight Maryland programs, including a founding member of the HAVI, the Shock Trauma Violence Intervention Program.

HAVI member programs provide services to violently injured patients in both traditional health care settings and the community. Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) vary in the specifics of their design and scope but typically include immediate intervention in the hospital or emergency department after an injury, followed by intensive, community-based care for approximately one year after discharge. Research shows HVIPs are effective in reducing patients' risk of repeat injuries, addressing critical needs such as mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, and a variety of other patient-centered outcomes.

Without intervention, these patients are at high risk for future repeat injuries, retaliatory violence, and mental health consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Research shows HVIPs are effective in reducing patients' risk of repeat injury, as well as addressing critical needs such as mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, and a variety of other patient-centered outcomes. A randomized control trial of patients in the Shock Trauma program found that participants were 84% less likely to return to the hospital with a repeat injury and four times less likely to be convicted of a violent crime.

HVIPs serve violently injured victims who may be disconnected from traditional institutions and are thus difficult to reach. A distinguishing feature of the model is the role of violence prevention professionals, specially trained and certified intervention workers. These individuals, who often come from the communities they serve, provide trauma-informed crisis intervention, links to community-based services, mentoring,



home visits, and long-term case management. They are a critical component of any comprehensive system to break the cycle of violence in our communities.

Unfortunately, funding for HVIPs has not kept up with the need. The result is that this approach is understaffed and underutilized, allowing violence to continue in our communities. Beyond the personal tragedy of each injury, community violence places a significant burden on the state's budget. It is estimated that Maryland taxpayers spend \$376 million annually on gun violence. We've made tremendous strides in Maryland after historic investments. However, many of those investments came from the American Rescue Plan Act, which is sunsetting this year. At the same time, victim of crime assistance dollars has plunged in recent years. Without smart legislation like HB0197, we can expect funding for these life saving strategies to decrease, leading to a predictable spike in community violence. HB0197 offers a smart and proactive approach to funding community violence throughout the State.

For these reasons, the HAVI respectfully asks the House Ways and Means Committee to provide a favorable report on HB0197 – *Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act*.

Sincerely,

Kalice Allen, MPH
Senior Coordinator, Policy and Advocacy
The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI)
Kalicea@TheHAVI.org