



**HB 0197**

**Favorable**

**TO:** Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, Members of the Ways and Means Committee

**FROM:** Ethan Bartlett

*Assistant Research and Policy Advisor, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. 750 E Pratt St, Baltimore MD, 21202.*

**DATE:** March 3, 2026

**RE:** HB 0197- Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

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Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Ethan Bartlett, and I am an Assistant Research and Policy Advisor for the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. As a center that focuses on evidence-based policies, including effective community violence intervention strategies, to prevent gun violence. The Center requests a favorable report for House Bill 197.

This bill increases the current 6.5% excise tax to 11% on the gross receipts from the sale of firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition in the state by federally licensed firearms dealers located within the state and specified dealers outside the state. HB 197 requires distributions of the revenue from the excise tax to the Maryland Violence Intervention and Program Fund, the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention within the Maryland Department of Health, the Coordinated Community Supports Partnership Fund, the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program within the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, the Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund, and the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical System. Sustainable funding for these programs and funds will improve safety and provide support for Marylanders.

### **Maryland's GVP Infrastructure**

From 2020-2024, Maryland's annual firearm homicide rate decreased by approximately 29% from 7.6 to 5.4 per 100,000 people.<sup>1</sup> This decrease has coincided with targeted efforts to bolster Maryland's gun violence prevention infrastructure. These efforts are essential to Maryland's holistic approach to preventing firearm violence and providing support to victims of firearm

violence and frontline workers. A non-exhaustive list of services and successes from the direct beneficiaries of the proposed revenue distribution includes the following:

- **Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (MD VIPP)** - Supporting evidence-based and informed violence reduction strategies through grant provision.<sup>ii</sup> In FY24, grantees reported reductions in both gun violence specifically and violent crime, increases in identified and engaged high-risk individuals in the community, and increases in program participants and clients served.<sup>ii</sup>
- **Maryland Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention** - Facilitating intersectional collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies to target firearm violence.<sup>iii</sup>
- **Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports** - Expanding access to high-quality behavioral health and related services for students and families.<sup>iv</sup> Programs are projected to serve 167,000 students and support services in 80% of Maryland schools during the 2025-2026 school year.<sup>iv</sup>
- **Survivors of Homicide Grant Program** - Providing victim assistance, advocacy, support, and other coordinated justice system responses to ensure that survivors of homicide victims can exercise their rights entitled by law.<sup>v</sup> In FY23, the program aided more than 2,000 Marylanders affected by homicide.<sup>v</sup>
- **Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund** - Providing funding for medical equipment and reimbursements for uncompensated care.<sup>vi</sup>
- **R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center**- Providing emergency medical assistance and critical care.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Need for A Consistent Funding Mechanism**

Recent gun violence prevention progress in Maryland has been driven by strategic planning and robust, intersectional collaboration, but that progress is at risk without a sustainable funding mechanism. Federal budget cuts have reduced funding that has supported the programs and services integral to decreasing firearm violence in Maryland. To continue its current trajectory, Maryland must replace these lost resources and secure a reliable, long-term funding source. The revenue generated from this excise tax will provide funding, allowing Maryland to continue fighting firearm violence throughout the state.

### **An Investment in Prevention**

Even with the decreased firearm violence and fatality rates, Maryland reported 671 fatal gun violence victims in 2024. Investment in the present and future of Marylanders is crucial. Given this, the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions and I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** committee report on House Bill 0197.

Sincerely,

Ethan Bartlett

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<sup>i</sup> Firearm Violence Data Dashboard. (2024). Maryland Department of Health.

<https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/mdh-dashboards/Pages/firearm-violence.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP) Annual Report FY 2024, Public Safety Article, § 4-906(c)(2). (2025). Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/PS-%C2%A7-4-906c2-GOCP-PY-2024-Violence-Intervention-and-Prevention-Program-Annual-Report.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention. (2026). Maryland Department of Health. <https://health.maryland.gov/violence-prevention/Pages/Home.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup> Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. (2026). Maryland Department of Health. <https://health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Pages/Maryland-Consortium-on-Consolidated-Community-Supports.aspx>

<sup>v</sup> Survivors of Homicide Grant Program FY 2023 Annual Report Criminal Procedure Article, § 11-1006(g). (2023). Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/CP-%C2%A7-11-1006g-GOCPYVS-Survivors-of-Homicide-Grant-Program-FY-2023-Annual-Report-MSAR-12659.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund Annual Report, Health General Article § 19-130. (2025). Maryland Health Care Commission. [https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hcfs/hcfs\\_trauma/documents/fy\\_2025\\_md\\_trauma\\_physician\\_svc\\_fund\\_rpt.pdf](https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hcfs/hcfs_trauma/documents/fy_2025_md_trauma_physician_svc_fund_rpt.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> About the Shock Trauma Center. (2026). University of Maryland Medical Center. <https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/shock-trauma/about>