



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 29, 2024

To: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 475 - Center for Firearm Violence Prevention – Establishment

Dear Chair Beidle:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 475, which establishes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention to reduce the public health issue of firearm-related injuries.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies firearm injuries as a serious public health problem, as 48,000 firearm-related deaths were recorded in 2022. More than half of those deaths were suicides, and more than four in 10 were homicides.¹ In Maryland, nearly 3,000 lives were lost between 2010 and 2020 due to self-inflicted harm with the use of a firearm—about 4.3 deaths per 100,000 Marylanders—according to the CDC.

Non-fatal firearm-related injuries in Maryland outnumber fatal injuries—22.6 per 100,000 versus 13.3 per 100,000. More than 70% of medically treated firearm injuries are a result of assault, while 20% of them are unintentional.² Individuals ages 25–44 constituted the largest proportion of non-fatal firearm injuries by age group in 2019–2020.

Firearm-related fatalities and injuries also have a significant financial on the state and the health care system. Gun deaths and injuries cost an estimated \$10.5 billion in Maryland each year, of which, at least \$389 million is paid by taxpayers.³ In 2016, the 1,652 shootings in Maryland cost \$70 million in health care expenses; \$154 million in law enforcement and criminal justice-related expenses; and \$9.1 million in costs to employers and lost income. On average, a non-fatal firearm injury that was treated and released cost \$29,234 and a hospitalized injury cost \$170,030.

Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model incentivizes approaches that prioritize population health and prevention strategies. As a public health issue, risk factors for injury by firearm are modifiable through strong policy and partnerships. Hospitals are inextricably linked to every firearm-related injury or fatality in the state and appreciate every effort to address this serious issue.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 475.

¹ Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html.

² At a Glance: Maryland, Everytown for Gun Safety, www.everytown.org/state/maryland.

³ Ted R. Miller and Bruce Lawrence analysis of CDC fatal injury: 2019 and HCUP nonfatal injury: 2019.



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