



## Senate Bill 545

### *Public Safety – Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund - Establishment*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: February 27, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 545 as it establishes an advisory council and fund to support local public health offices in their violence prevention efforts.

Violence significantly impacts social determinants that lead to poor health and economic outcomes in a community. Not only does violence have a direct effect on victims, it has been linked to mental trauma, behavioral issues, chronic disease, and poor quality of life for all community members indirectly touched by it.

Local governments, in collaboration with a range of partners – local health departments, schools, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and social services – play a pivotal role in helping to stem the impacts and spread of violence from a public health perspective. Being in and of the community, local governments and their respective partners are best suited to identify needs and administer assistance.

SB 545 supports local governments and their partners as they endeavor to prevent and address violence in their communities. It creates a framework to incentivize and support evidence-based, public health-centered efforts. The bill establishes a \$5 million fund to support those initiatives and creates a council to help the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention oversee and award the grants to eligible local governments to develop community-based anti-violence strategies.

The dedicated, structured, and collective effort the bill provides is key to finding solutions to the violence that is unfortunately plaguing some county neighborhoods. Inadequate funding hinders local governments’ efforts. Funding awarded through this program covers a minimum of three consecutive years and allows local government grantees to make valuable headway without fear of having to end a program prematurely due to inadequate funding or support.

Additionally, the scientific research and data required to obtain funding through this program will help provide insight into the root causes of violence in a community and guidance on how the problem can be tackled. Independent third-party evaluation of the programs that receive funding helps ensure that resources are not squandered, programs are kept accountable, and goals are met.

SB 545 provides local governments with funding and support to confront the public health impacts of violence on their communities. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 545.