

SB 580 - FAV - MML.pdf

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Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 29, 2023

Committee: House Appropriations

Bill: SB 580 - Public Safety - Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund

Position: Support

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports Senate Bill 580, which will significantly defray costs to municipal police agencies as they seek to provide critical mental health care to their officers. Specifically, the bill provides grant opportunities to municipal police agencies for the specific purpose of providing mental health and stress management training for their officers.

The stress on law enforcement officers can be incredibly high and resulting mental health problems are real. The grant program established in this bill is clear recognition that officers need help managing the toll that their responsibilities take on their wellbeing. Training on ways to improve mental health and reduce stress is critical to most workers but especially in the first responder field. The grant funding in the bill will directly increase the opportunities for our municipal police officers to invest in their own mental wellness.

On behalf of the 88 municipal police departments and over 1,800 municipal police officers, MML supports SB 580 and requests a favorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0580.pdf

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BILL NO.: **SB 580**

TITLE: Public Safety – Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund

SPONSOR: Senator Elfreth

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 39, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 580 – Public Safety – Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund. This legislation would establish the Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund.

The overall wellbeing of our local law enforcement officers is critical for enabling our police departments to be as effective as possible in keeping communities safe and secure. As police retention continues to dwindle across the country, it is critical that state and local government take the necessary steps towards maintaining morale, mental wellness, and overall quality of life for law enforcement officers.

SB 580 is a strong step towards supporting our local police forces. Baltimore County has already implemented officer wellness programs and has found these to be successful in assisting officers with mental health difficulties. This bill will provide the necessary funding for the County to not only continue the great work accomplished by these programs, but potentially increase engagement and follow-up in the future.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 580. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB0580-APP_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 580

Public Safety – Officer and Community Wellness Training Grant Fund

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: March 29, 2023

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 580. This bill supports training for local law enforcement agencies to best respond to, and support, their residents' mental health needs.

SB 580 can help provide local law enforcement agencies with resources to update practices and training protocols for interactions with people experiencing a mental health crisis. These efforts would include expanded mental health first aid training, thus ensuring an even greater likelihood that an emergency situation will not unfold in a harmful way for either party. This type of training will allow officers to better identify an individual's needs in situations where those needs might not be obvious or the individual is unable to communicate them - whether because they're actively in crisis or may not yet understand their condition themselves.

Additionally, the funds can be used for training officers on how to identify and communicate with co-workers when peer support is needed. Regular exposure to tense and sometimes traumatic environments can result in adverse mental health and physical symptoms from an incident that took place in the line of duty. The peer support training outlined in the bill will enable law enforcement officers to protect not just residents in need, but themselves and one other.

Law enforcement readily put themselves in circumstances where the mental health needs of an individual might not be obvious or visible to the untrained eye. SB 580 wisely targets this as a primary concern, and provides important resources to promote best outcomes in such difficult encounters. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 580.