

HB481- Criminal Law – Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Handgun – Penalty
February 15, 2023

Testimony of Martha Nathanson, Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development;
Adam Rosenberg, Vice President, Violence Intervention and Prevention

House Judiciary Committee

Position: **SUPPORT**

We are pleased to **SUPPORT** HB481, which would raise the maximum criminal penalty for unlawfully wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm from three to five years.

LifeBridge Health is a regional health and hospital system serving Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Carroll County. LifeBridge also operates the Center for Hope, a comprehensive violence intervention center that serves the Baltimore region. Center for Hope provides trauma-informed crisis intervention, forensic interviews, medical exams, mental health, wraparound case management, family advocacy and workforce development services to patients and community members who have experienced child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence, and community/gun violence. We help over 6,000 violence victims and their families in the Baltimore region each year.

Center for Hope’s community violence intervention programs recognize that gun violence is treatable, preventable public health issue. The Center operates six Safe Streets sites, which help interrupt violent conflicts and break the cycle of retaliatory community violence. We also operate hospital responder programs at Sinai Hospital and Grace Medical Center, which provide intervention and long term case management for patients suffering from interpersonal violence, including gunshot wounds and shootings. Center for Hope’s community violence programs focus on mental and behavioral health, transportation, housing and job skill assistance. With the right supports, our patients can exit lives shaped by violent conflicts.

Center for Hope recognizes that one aspect of treating the disease of gun violence can include removing offenders from communities and groups that keep them immersed in violent and illegal activity, while providing a stronger disincentive to possessing a firearm that can result in violence and death. Increasing the sentence for illegally wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm could place some offenders in detention centers away from their usual locus of operation, which could ultimately interrupt the short-term spread of retaliatory violence. That strategy, paired with longer term violence interruption programs and supports, will hopefully help curb the unacceptable levels of gun violence facing our patients, families, and communities in Baltimore City and around the state.

We support this strategy as one part of a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence. We urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB481.

Martha D. Nathanson, Esq., Vice President, Government Relations & Community Development,
LifeBridge Health
mnathans@lifebridgehealth.org (443) 286-4812

Adam Rosenberg, Esq., Vice President, Violence Intervention and Prevention Executive Director, Center
for Hope arosenberg@lifebridgehealth.org (410) 601-HOPE