



**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC SAFETY AND  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

**Mission Statement**

*On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety and Government Operations will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to; emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, and the executive, administrative, and operational functions of the city government and libraries.*

**The Honorable Mark Conway  
Chairman**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**Wednesday, June 30, 2021  
1:00 PM**

**Council Bill: 21-0049R  
Investigational Hearing –  
Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies**

## CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer  
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Kristerfer Burnett  
Mark Conway  
Eric Costello  
Sharon Green Middleton  
Odette Ramos  
James Torrence  
*Staff: Richard Krummerich*



**BILL SYNOPSIS**

**Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations**

**Bill 21-0049R**

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**Investigational Hearing – Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies**

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*Sponsor: Councilman Mark Conway*

*Introduced: June 8, 2021*

**Purpose:**

For the purpose of inviting representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department’s Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about the existing alternatives to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.

**Effective:** N/A

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**Agency Reports**

Baltimore City Administrator	
Department of Law	
Health Department	
Police Department	
Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement	

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## Analysis

### Program Profile

#### **Roca, Inc.**

The Roca program was founded by Molly Baldwin in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1988. The organization was operated as part of the North Suffolk Mental Health, but quickly became an independent organization shortly thereafter. From its first day, the program has targeted high risk young men out of schools, gang members and high risk young mothers. In conjunction with those efforts Roca conducted policy work that identified teen pregnancy as a major barrier that kept young people in poverty, so they began focusing on teen pregnancy prevention. Throughout the years Roca's mission has been to be a relentless force in disrupting incarceration, poverty, and racism by engaging the young adults, police, and systems at the center of urban violence in relationships to address trauma, find hope, and drive change.

#### Roca's 4 Step Intervention Model

- Create Safety and Stability
  - Relentless Outreach – it is reported that it takes an average of 10 relentless efforts to find a young person, and it can take hundreds of attempts until they make it into the program.
  - Transformational Relationships – the program has honest conversations with young people about the risks of not dropping a gun, or the fear of losing custody of one's child comes from an intensive form of case management over a period of 2-4 years.
- Teach Life-Saving Skills: Think – Feel – Do
  - Cognitive-Behavioral Theory – this is the way to understand how situations affect what we think and say in our head, what we feel in our bodies, and what we do in response. Practicing this will help identify a cycle, stop, use a skill and make a choice instead of reacting.
- Practice skills, Relapse, and Repeat
  - Learning Experiences – Roca is not a jobs or employment program, but rather a behavioral health program. Young people cannot fully access new opportunities without regulating their emotions and dealing with their trauma. They need trauma-informed life skills, educational, parenting, and employment services that meet them where they are and allow for mistakes and relapses.
- Engage Institutions and Systems
  - Steps they Take – Roca identifies people within systems who are directly facing urban violence; then they build meaningful relationships by having hard conversations, expecting setbacks to be a part of the change process, but through this process they work towards better outcomes.

#### **Group Violence Prevention Strategy**

At the core of the Group Violence Prevention Strategy is the Focus Deterrence Intervention Strategy. In each city that focus deterrence has been implemented in, it has been called something different. For example, Operation Ceasefire, Boston Gun Project, Chicago Project Safe Neighborhoods, and Drug Market Intervention. From a theoretical perspective, focus deterrence is a crime control model that operates at the individual, group/peer, and community-level. The premise is based on the notion that most of the serious violence that is committed by a small group of repeat offenders that are

socially connected within a contagion. Within the focus deterrence approach studies have found that an individual's decision to engage in criminal activity is based on their belief and experiences associated with the swiftness, certainty, and severity of punishment.

Focused Deterrence Interventions incorporate six steps:

1. The most problematic criminal behavior is identified for intervention;
2. An interagency enforcement group that includes police, prosecution, and probation/parole offers various points of view on the intervention and is responsible for implementation;
3. Information gathered from law enforcement officers in the field and other sources are used to identify the individuals and groups at high risk of engaging in the targeted behavior. These individuals and groups are then the focus of the intervention;
4. The interagency enforcement group notifies individuals or groups during notification meetings or "call-ins" that they are under police scrutiny for problematic behavior and that further criminal activity will receive urgent legal attention;
5. A special enforcement operation is designed to specifically target high risk individuals or groups, particularly those who continue engaging in the targeted behavior or crime;
6. The interagency enforcement group involves service providers and relevant community voices.

### Safe Streets

Safe Streets is an evidence-based, public health program to reduce gun violence among youth ages 14 to 24. It is modeled after Chicago's Ceasefire program, and it employs outreach professionals to deescalate and mediate disputes that might otherwise result in serious violence. These violence interrupters serve as positive role models and direct youth toward services and opportunities to live productive, violence free lives.

### 9-1-1 Diversion Program

The Baltimore City 9-1-1 call diversion program will begin by diverting two call types and will leverage existing expertise in local community-based organizations. The pilot program will be implemented in partnership with Behavioral Health System Baltimore and Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc. The program will divert two behavioral health call types to start – "non-suicidal and alert" (psychiatric/abnormal behavior/suicide) and "suicidal and alert" (psychiatric/abnormal behavior/suicide). These two categories alone account for an estimated 1,000 calls received by 9-1-1 operators annually. An internal working group, including data fellows and the Baltimore City Fire Department's medical director, will provide daily quality assurance.

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## Additional Information

**Fiscal Note:** Not Available

**Information Source(s):** Agency Reports, National Institute on Justice, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Roca, Inc., Johns Hopkins – Bloomberg School of Public Health

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Analysis by: Samuel Johnson  
Analysis Date: June 30, 2021

Direct Inquiries to: (410) 396-1091

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 21-0049R  
(First Reader)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Conway, Bullock, Ramos, Burnett, Middleton, Cohen

Introduced and read first time: June 8, 2021

Assigned to: Public Safety and Government Operations Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, City Administrator, Baltimore Police Department, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, Baltimore City Health Department

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigational Hearing - Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police  
4 Department's Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the  
5 Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about  
6 the existing alternatives to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.

7 **Recitals**

8 **WHEREAS**, While policing has an important role to play in responding to crime, public safety  
9 and violence prevention require a broader and more comprehensive approach;

10 **WHEREAS**, A crime prevention strategy that allows Baltimore City and its residents to thrive  
11 and feel safe will include serious focus on the root causes of crime and violence;

12 **WHEREAS**, The Baltimore City Council is interested in learning what alternatives to  
13 traditional policing the City has in place and how those fit together in broader efforts by the City  
14 to increase the safety of neighborhoods;

15 **WHEREAS**, The Baltimore City Council would like to better understand the scope of the  
16 activities of ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department's Group Violence Prevention  
17 Strategy and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety;

18 **WHEREAS**, The Baltimore City Council would like to better understand the effectiveness of  
19 the programs and services of the aforementioned groups, and how other programs, such as  
20 Operation Ceasefire, could succeed in the City;

21 **WHEREAS**, The Baltimore City Council would like to explore opportunities to expand,  
22 supplement, and support programs that have proven to be successful in increasing public safety  
23 and curbing crime.

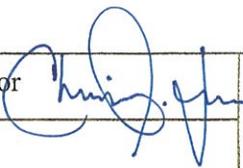
EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

1           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City  
2 Council invites representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department’s  
3 Group Violence Prevention Strategy and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor’s Office of  
4 Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about the existing alternatives  
5 to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.

6           **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
7 Director of ROCA Baltimore, the Health Commissioner, the Police Commissioner, the Director  
8 of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, and the Mayor’s Legislative  
9 Liaison to the City Council.

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

**AGENCY REPORTS**

<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	Christopher Shorter, City Administrator 	CITY of <b>BALTIMORE</b>  <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Office of the Mayor 100 N. Holliday Street, Room Baltimore, MD 21202		
	SUBJECT	City Council Resolution #21-0049R Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies		

**TO** The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council c/o  
Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

DATE: June 24, 2021

**Background:**

The City Administrators Office (CAO) is herein reporting on City Council Resolution #21-0049R, Investigational Hearing – Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies. Council Resolution #21-0049R calls on representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department’s Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about the approaches, strategies, and programs used as alternatives to policing. As referred to the City Administrators Office, City Council Resolution #21-0049R asks the representatives of these various programs to present certain data and contribute to an engaging discussion about opportunities to support programs that have had proven success in increasing public safety and decreasing crime. This resolution calls on the Office of the City Administrator to expand on how to avoid these programs functioning in silos and the possibilities of data-sharing and systemwide strategy coordination.

**Conclusions:**

After review of Resolution #21-0049R, the Office of the City Administrator through the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety Sunny Schnitzer directly supports and ensures appropriate coordination and information sharing occurs between ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department’s Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. The Office of the City Administrator through Deputy Mayor Schnitzer is available to provide ongoing updates as needed and based on the request of City Council should that arise.

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CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT,  
Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW  
DANA P. MOORE, ACTING CITY SOLICITOR  
100 N. HOLLIDAY STREET  
SUITE 101, CITY HALL  
BALTIMORE, MD 21202

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Honorable President and Members  
of the City Council of Baltimore  
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary  
Room 409, City Hall  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

June 25, 2021

Re: City Council Bill 21-0049R- Investigative Hearing- Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 21-0049R for form and legal sufficiency. This resolution is for the purpose of inviting representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department's Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about the existing alternatives to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.

In general, Art. III, Sec. 9 of the City Charter and Art. 1, Sec. 1-4 gives the City Council authority to call before it, department heads and other City officials to inquire about the operation of City agencies and to investigate complaints and allegations regarding City operations.

Council Bill 21-0049R is an appropriate resolution to initiate this process and request appropriate officials to attend to discuss efforts and measures being taken to investigate and consider alternatives to policing strategies for the City.

The Law Department approves Council Bill 21-0049R for form and legal sufficiency as it is a valid method of inviting City officials to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elena DiPietro".

Elena R. DiPietro  
Chief Solicitor

Cc: James Shea, City Solicitor  
Darnell Ingram, Deputy Solicitor

Stephen Salisbury, Chief of Staff  
Natasha Mehu, Director. MOGR  
Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
Matthew Stegman, President's Office  
Nikki Thompson, President's Legislative Liaison  
Ashlea Brown, Special Solicitor  
Victor Tervalo, Chief Solicitor  
Hilary Ruley, Chief Solicitor  
Dereka Bolden, Assistant Solicitor  
Avery Aisenstark



# BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor

**Michael S. Harrison**  
Police Commissioner

June 30, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
Room 400, City Hall  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**RE: City Council Bill #21-0049R**  
**Investigational Hearing - Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 21-0049R for the purpose of inviting representatives from ROCA, Safe Streets, the Baltimore Police Department's Group Violence Prevention Strategy, and 911 Diversion Program, and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to inform the City Council about the existing alternatives to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.

Thank you so much for allowing BPD to respond to this resolution. The Department agrees that successfully providing for public safety and violence prevention requires a comprehensive multi-agency approach toward addressing the root causes of crime and violence. The Baltimore Police Department is playing an important but supportive role in developing the non-policing strategies that the City Council has requested to be briefed on. Within the body of this report, we will just touch on the Community Policing and Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) efforts that BPD is coordinating with MONSE.

## **COMMUNITY POLICING**

In April of 2020, the BPD released its first-ever Community Policing Plan which you can access at: <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/bpd-community-policing-plan>. The mission of this Community Policing Plan is to institutionalize Community Policing principles throughout the Baltimore Police Department to improve police-community relations, and to reduce crime and disorder through collaborative problem-solving partnerships with the community.

Community Policing is a philosophy emphasizing community involvement in crime prevention efforts through three core components: community partnerships, organizational transformation and problem solving:

- **Community partnerships** are involved in defining, prioritizing, and addressing crime problems.
- **Organizational transformation** flattens the department, decentralizes units, and provides executive support for community partnerships and collaborative problem solving.
- **Problem solving** is a process that uses police and community members' expertise to identify, and understand the underlying issues that create crime, disorder, and fear of victimization.

Community Engagement is key to the implementation of Community Policing. Community Engagement refers to activities that foster positive interactions between community members and BPD members, employ Community Policing ideals, create opportunities for constructive exchanges, and foster substantive collaboration between the community and BPD, while enhancing trust and legitimacy. While BPD formerly conducted Community Engagement primarily from centralized units in headquarters, BPD will now expect officers across the Department to engage positively with the community through three specific methods: Informal Community Engagement, Formal Community Engagement, and Daily Problem Solving.

### **Informal Community Engagement**

Refers to ad hoc opportunities to interact with community members. This could include activities such as playing ball with children in the neighborhood between calls or having a conversation with a community resident or business owner during a foot patrol assignment. Simply being present does not qualify as Informal Engagement. Central to this activity is interaction and conversation with community members.

### **Formal Community Engagement**

Refers to participation in neighborhood and community meetings/ events, establishment of external partnerships that focus on long-term programs to promote and foster police-community interactions, and outreach efforts in all neighborhoods, including neighborhoods where no neighborhood association has been established to provide consultation and input to BPD.

### **Daily Problem Solving**

Refers to efforts to address or resolve different problems and issues within the communities that BPD serves. These problems can range from minor disputes between neighbors to high-risk environmental conditions or lesser offense issues. While these problems may not always present an immediate public safety concern, if left un-addressed they can lead to future issues and calls-for-service. Through Daily Problem Solving, officers will work with community members to address community concerns on an ongoing basis.

The BPD is currently delivering community policing training to all sworn members of the Department. The goal of the training is to make clear the new expectation that all officers, regardless of rank or assignment, are expected to work closely with the community to build partnerships and solve problems. We are truly excited about this monumental shift in policing strategy and focus. Moreover, we anticipate that our adoption of a community policing focus will ultimately help to strengthen our relationship with the community we serve and ultimately reduce crime as collaboration and trust between officers and residents grow.

## **GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY (GVRS)**

To systematically address overall violence in the community, BPD is working with MONSE and the State's attorney's Office to launch the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) which is an evidence-based initiative designed to reduce serious violence. Also known as focused deterrence, the strategy works by engaging directly with those most intimately involved in and affected by violence, leveraging an intentional collaboration between law enforcement, social services, and community members who collectively co-sign and deliver an anti-violence message to stop the shooting. The GVRS message is grounded in the following core tenets:

- Every person and community needs and deserves to be safe;
- Violence is often driven by a very small number of groups and people; and
- To increase safety, we must collectively focus on that small number of people in order to support them in their daily lives, communicate community norms in support of everybody's safety and success, and where necessary create swift, certain, and legitimate sanctions for violence

BPD fully supports City Council Resolution 21-0041R and looks forward to a robust discussion on the many non-policing strategies that are currently being implemented throughout Baltimore City. Thank you for allowing us to comment on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.  
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary of the Baltimore City Council  
Natasha Mehu, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
Nina Themalis, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison, MOGR  
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff  
Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff

F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department  AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject/ Position:	21-0049R – Investigational Hearing - Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies <b>FAVORABLE</b>		

To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall

June 30, 2021

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #21-0049R, entitled, “Investigational Hearing - Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies.” This resolution seeks a discussion “to inform the City Council about the existing alternatives to policing strategies the City has in its arsenal.”

### **Addressing Violence as a Public Health Crisis**

Exposure to violence increases risk for harm to overall health. In 2018, the American Public Health Association (APHA) released a policy statement deeming violence a public health crisis. It is known that exposure to trauma and violence is directly linked to the development of chronic diseases, increased risk taking behaviors, increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, higher rates of suicide and increased rates of depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the social determinants of health are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality of life risks and outcomes. Examples include safe housing, access to grocery stores, quality of education and job training, exposure to crime and violence, racism, residential segregation, and socioeconomic conditions, just to name a few. Economic conditions in particular contribute to both the cause and effect of violence. People living in poverty bear a disproportionate share of the public health burden of violence in almost every community.

To have a real and lasting impact on violence in Baltimore City, the social determinants of health must be addressed. Therefore, exposure to violence in and of itself is a social determinant of health and most often, that exposure is completely preventable, meaning prevention is key. Violence is not randomly distributed. The same social factors that shape health are also strongly linked to violence and addressing those links will more effectively guide us with addressing violence prevention.

For true and lasting impact, addressing the social determinants of health is key to prevention. Programs and services should be linked to what communities have identified as a need, and emphasis should also be placed on how government agencies and private organizations deliver

those services alongside the communities being served. Any strategy should ensure all programs and services are practicing cultural competency. It should also be collaborative with community partners and inclusive of marginalized groups. Addressing structural disadvantages across systems is where progress can be made. It is important that the community's needs are at the forefront of the City's response.

### **Baltimore City Violence Prevention Task Force**

On September 17, 2020, Baltimore City Commissioner of Health, Letitia Dzirasa, M.D., convened the Citywide Violence Prevention Task Force (Task Force), the group charged by the Ordinance with addressing violence and trauma using a public health approach. The early work of the Task Force included creating a violence prevention framework (Framework).

In February 2021, the Framework was used to support the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood, Safety, and Engagement plan to develop and operationalize a strategic plan.<sup>1</sup> The Task Force is comprised of Baltimore City agencies and organizations, Maryland State agencies, and United States federal government technical assistance partners including:

#### *Baltimore City Municipal Agencies*

- Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ)
- Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP)
- Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD)
- Baltimore City Police Department (BPD)
- Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS)
- Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office (SAO)
- Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC)
- Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success (MOCFS)
- Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (MOEM)
- Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS)

#### *State of Maryland*

- Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP)
- State Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)

#### *Technical Assistance Partners*

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)

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<sup>1</sup> Baltimore City, Violence Prevention Framework and Plan, February 2021.  
[https://monse.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/MayorBMS\\_Draft\\_ViolenceReductionFrameworkPlan.pdf](https://monse.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/MayorBMS_Draft_ViolenceReductionFrameworkPlan.pdf)

- Mayor’s Office of Performance Innovation (OPI)
- University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW)
- Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute (JHUHI)

**Summary of the Task Force’s Findings**

Throughout the Framework development process, the Task Force expressed a desire to work with community-based organizations to align current citywide strategies focused on addressing gun violence, applying an health equity lens throughout planning and implementation of the plan as well as implementing a trauma-informed approach throughout city agencies’ services and programs.<sup>2</sup> The Task Force focused on four indicators and their associated results, as presented in the following table-

Table 1. Citywide Violence Prevention Plan Results and Indicators

Result	Indicator
Equitable life opportunities	Graduation rates
Equitable life expectancy	Life expectancy
Are safe	Uniformed Crime Reporting (UCR) total crime data
Are thriving	Percentage of the population employed (ages 16-64)

Result 1: People who live, work, and visit Baltimore City have equitable life opportunities.

There is a disparity in graduation rates based on race. Overall, 72.18% of Baltimore City students graduate from high school. Unfortunately, when looking at disaggregated data, graduation rates are 72.94% for White students and 97.82% for Asian students graduate; yet only 72.46% for African American students and 54.91% for LatinX students. In response, Task Force members identified accountability, activities, quality of education, and stability as supports that can help students graduate high school.

Examples of protective factors identified by Task Force members include accountability of students/staff/parents, recreational activities including mindfulness, quality and safe educational environments, relationships with mentors, and overall stability with respect to family, housing, and food. Other identified factors impacting whether a student graduates include community

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

challenges, incarceration, instability at home (e.g., family, housing, and financial), and stressful or traumatic childhood.

Members of the Task Force were asked to identify strategies to increase the likelihood of youth graduating high school. Evidence-based strategies were tiered into three categories: community-level (extra-curricular activities, life skills training, diversion projects, summer employment), family/household level (Women's Infants, and Children's Program; Nutritional education, Parent Teacher Association), and individual level (social emotional learning, mentoring, referral to treatment in school-based health centers).

Community-level strategies include educational, mentoring, and service engagement. Individual strategies include education (high quality curriculums, small class sizes, entrepreneurship programs), financial supports (universal basic income, support for parents, financial literacy classes), free resources (family and school supplies), and job opportunities (apprenticeships, internships, and mentoring).

## Result 2: People who live, work, and visit Baltimore City have an equitable life expectancy.

In 2018, the average life expectancy for a resident of Baltimore City was 72.7 years. In 2017, the greatest recorded disparity in life expectancy was between Clifton-Berea (66.9 years) and Cross Country/Cheswolde (87.1), representing nearly a 20-year difference.<sup>3</sup>

Task Force members identified education, finances (e.g., employment opportunities, safe and affordable homes), access to healthcare (public health approach to drug use, healthy food, exercise), healthy interpersonal relationships, and safety (walkability, living in supportive safe neighborhoods) as mechanisms to help people live longer. Moreover, Task Force members identified lack of access to services and resources (healthy food and affordable housing), healthcare challenges (lack of access, lead, substance misuse, Adverse Childhood Experiences), safety issues (poverty and violent neighborhoods), and lack of supportive relationships as issues that cause people to die younger.

Members of the Task Force were asked to identify strategies to increase life expectancy. Evidence-based services included the following: Complete Streets planning, health focused interventions (smoking cessation, decreasing liquor store density, safe sex interventions, etc...), quality/supportive relationships, and savings plans for those under age 18.

Community-based strategies included increased community-based activities (walking clubs, pet therapy, cooking workshops), collective group spaces, mindfulness, and pairing youth with older mentors. Innovative strategies included renewed investment and reform of community resources (rebuild trust, quality food markets, gyms), healthcare access (safe injection sites, universal healthcare), and social justice (reparations, Baltimore City's equity assessment coordinator and plan, examining war on drugs, shifting funding from criminal justice to social services, and gun control).

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<sup>3</sup> Baltimore City Health Department. 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile for Baltimore City (overall), June 2017. [https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2000%20Baltimore%20City%20\(overall\)%20\(rev%206-22-17\).pdf](https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2000%20Baltimore%20City%20(overall)%20(rev%206-22-17).pdf)

### Result 3: People who live, work, and visit Baltimore City are safe.

In 2019, Baltimore City experienced 84,904 individual crimes. That same year, 93 percent of homicide victims in Baltimore City were Black/African American, while 89 percent (311) were male victims (2020).<sup>4</sup> Out of 348 victims of homicide, 325 were Black.<sup>5</sup> Task Force members identified lack of accessibility (barriers to employment, lack of out of school activities, lack of entrepreneurship opportunities), lack of quality education, lack of safety (lack of police-community trust; cultural norms promoting/accepting violence), and lack of supports (lack of supportive relationships, consequences, and mentoring) as causes of crime. Task Force members identified mentoring, resources, and safety (police-community trust, substance abuse treatment/diversion) as ways to prevent crime. Another strategy proposed by the Task Force focused on the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) as an evidence-based approach.

The Task Force focused on several evidence-based interventions focused on crime/violence (group violence reduction, environmental design, law enforcement assisted diversion), gainful employment, healthcare supports (Family Functional Therapy, Trauma Cognitive Therapy), and mentoring. Community-based strategies included civic engagement, communities and groups (Friday night pop-ups, family activities, conflict resolution), faith-based, and mentoring. Innovative strategies included enhanced access to services, financial support, equity in opportunities, and justice.

An additional strategy addressing trauma upstream is the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act<sup>6</sup>, which established a Trauma-Informed Care Task Force (TIC) requiring Baltimore City employees receive formal trauma-informed care training, with the goal of delivering services in a manner consistent with public health best practices. Under this legislation, BCHD is responsible for developing and implementing a training curriculum in collaboration with TIC.<sup>7</sup>

### Result 4: People who live, work, and visit Baltimore City are thriving.

To measure whether our communities are thriving, the Task Force determined it should track the City's employment rate, which had been slowly increasing between 2015 (60.4%) and 2018 (63.4%). It determined that increased employment is a useful indicator because it demonstrates individuals are obtaining a source of income and learning new skills, which can translate into improvements in socio-economic status and overall reported wellbeing.

Although the unemployment rate among Black/African-Americans in Baltimore City has fallen over the last several years, a large gap remains among Black and White residents' unemployment rates, 11.5% for the former versus 3.7% for the latter. Significant gaps in types of occupations

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<sup>4</sup> Prudente, T. (2020, January 2). 2019 closes with 348 homicides in Baltimore, second-deadliest year on record. baltimoresun.com. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-2019-homicide-final-count-20200101-jnauuumukbdh3edsyypspm3he-story.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Elijah Cummings Healing City Act, 19-0410, 2019. <https://baltimore.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4068857&GUID=9C48A666-88A8-4D49-A794-AC0D1C3D49B9&Options=ID%7Cext%7C&Search=trauma>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

and skills also persist. On average, the City's Black workers' median income is half that of White workers.

To assist in improving employment rates, Task Force members identified expanding employment opportunities, health services (basic support and stabilization, cognitive behavioral therapy, substance abuse treatment), and transportation. Task Force members identified certain barriers to employment including a lack of quality education, poor health, social justice inequities, lack of safety, poor literacy, and lack of resources.

Evidence-based strategies identified by the Task Force to improve employment rates among Baltimore City residents involved criminal justice reform (teen court diversion, ban the box), vocational training, school-based training, and substance-use related interventions. Community-based strategies included promoting increased community involvement, financial/employment incentives, and peer support.

### **Current BCHD Programs Curbing Violence**

The Youth Services and Advocacy Project (YSAP) housed within BCHD provides services to primary and secondary victims of violence between ages 11 and 24. It is intended to curb violence by addressing the risk factors clients face by virtue of their exposure to violence. YSAP seeks to do the following:

- Increase youth's access and utilization of victim services
- Increase education and awareness of violence and trauma
- Empower primary and secondary victims affected to safely seek help

To date, in FY21, YSAP has served over 100 survivors of crime, with 8 survivors having lost a family member to homicide. In FY20, 26 victims lost a family due to homicide, 15 were shooting survivors, and 4 were victims of human trafficking.

Additionally, BCHD has focused on addressing intimate partner violence. The Office of Youth and Trauma Services Supporting Our Students (SOS) has implemented the Dating Matters® Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships curriculum, a comprehensive teen dating violence prevention model developed by the CDC to stop teen dating violence before it starts. Dating Matters is an evidence-based teen dating violence prevention model that includes prevention strategies for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. It focuses on teaching 11-14 year-old youths healthy relationship skills before they start dating, and reducing behaviors that increase the risk for dating violence, like substance abuse and sexual risk-taking.<sup>8</sup> Since 2016, four high schools in West Baltimore City have taken part in SOS:

- ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School
- Frederick Douglas High School
- Reginald F. Lewis School of Business and Law
- Renaissance Academy

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<sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018, August 3). *Dating Matters*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/datingmatters/index.html>.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented many youth from attending school, with a resulting decrease in participation in community-based programming in school settings. To address this issue, in year 4, SOS expanded to include the following community-based organizations:

- AZIZA/PE&CE
- Let's Thrive Baltimore
- Truth to Power, Baltimore

In years one through four, SOS has educated 835 Baltimore City youth on identifying behaviors that could lead to dating violence, how to connect to resources if faced with dating violence, and successful methods of conflict mediation.

It should also be noted that the SOS Safe Dates curriculum equips our youth with knowledge that will help them identify abusive relationships versus healthy relationships. Helping them to identify red flags and signs of teen dating violence, while connecting those victims and perpetrators of teen dating violence to the appropriate resources.

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Altogether, BCHD welcomes a discussion on public health and other initiatives as alternatives to policing, and urges a **favorable** report for Council Bill #21-0049R.



June 28, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
City Hall, Room 400  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**RE: City Council Bill 21-0049R  
Investigational Hearing - Existing Alternatives to Policing Strategies**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) appreciates the opportunity to discuss the City's existing alternatives to policing strategies. MONSE is committed to developing and improving strategies to reduce violence and reduce harm to communities by empowering community-based alternatives as the option of first resort. While law enforcement is a valuable partner for many crime reduction efforts, there is broad agreement that Baltimore cannot arrest its way out of this violence epidemic. The overreliance on police to reduce violence and strengthen community safety has not only failed to yield sustainable results; it has also come at an extremely high social cost to many of the city's most vulnerable communities. At the core of MONSE's mission is to focus on the prevention of violence and the promotion of healing through an equity-based, community-led, and trauma-informed approach.

MONSE is in a unique position to discuss the wide array of existing and planned violence prevention strategies which do not rely solely on law enforcement. In addition to inviting MONSE, City Council Bill Resolution 21-0049R invites representatives from programs which MONSE either manages or serves as a primary coordinating partner. MONSE operates the Safe Streets violence intervention program, coordinates the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and State's Attorney's Office (SAO), and manages the relationship with GVRS service partner ROCA. While MONSE is not part of the 911 Diversion Program pilot, we will help with the expansion of the program after the pilot is completed.

Since our valued partners at ROCA have been invited to present before the City Council, this report will focus on Safe Streets, GVRS, and coordinating efforts to reduce violence using a public health approach.

**Safe Streets**

Since 2007, Safe Streets has been Baltimore's flagship gun violence reduction program. Founded in 2000 by epidemiologist Dr. Gary Slutkin, Cure Violence is a public health approach that uses trusted messengers in the community to interrupt the transmission of violence. Violence interrupters spread anti-violence messages and encourage positive changes

**Safe Streets Expansion**

McElderry Park – 2007  
Cherry Hill – 2008  
Park Heights – 2013  
Sandtown – 2016  
Belair – 2019  
Brooklyn – 2019  
Penn North – 2019  
Franklin Square – 2019  
Woodbourne – 2019  
Belvedere – Launching 2021

in individual behavior as well as community norms around violence. In 2007, the Cure Violence model pioneered in Chicago came to McElderry Park in East Baltimore. Later this year, Safe Streets will be adding its tenth site: Belvedere.

How many people does it serve?

Safe Streets serves the residents of 10 target areas across Baltimore City, totaling 2.6 square miles.

How has Safe Streets contributed to crime reduction?

Past evaluations of the program from Johns Hopkins have found that Safe Streets sites are associated with decreases in fatal and nonfatal shootings, both in the sites' target areas and the area immediately surrounding the sites. In 2020, Safe Streets sites mediated over 2,300 conflicts. Last week, the Cherry Hill site celebrated over one year without a firearm homicide in their target area.

How are communities responding to these programs?

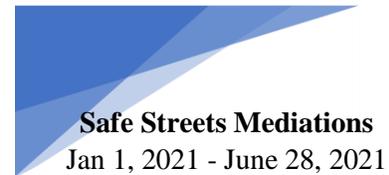
A core piece of Safe Streets' model is community mobilization. Sites host events and conduct daily outreach to share information, build trust with community members, and spread the Safe Streets message via credible messengers. Safe Streets sites are regarded as trusted community hubs to access resources and conflict mediation services. In 2020, Safe Streets sites hosted 451 community mobilization events with 58,000+ total attendance.

What does it take to expand to full scale?

Expansion at the community level will require additional administrative and site staff. When the expansion began, the program recommended that all Safe Streets Sites need increased staffing levels to address the volume of violence in the city. Adequate staffing is required in order to provide proper coverage and ensure outcomes. Three MONSE staff members currently provide administrative support for all ten sites: Deputy Director, Data Analyst, and Community Liaison. In addition to these existing positions, expansion would require MONSE to account for the provision of:

- Workforce Development & Education Coordination
- Training Coordination
- Mental Health Supports
- Community Liaisons
- Life Coaching
- Expanded Community Outreach
- Peer Recovery Support

Full scale implementation of a comprehensive violence intervention ecosystem requires a significant investment in both Baltimore's flagship program and other community-based violence prevention programming. Mayor Scott has been clear about his intentions to provide the appropriate funding to support the work necessary to intelligently scale.



Belair-Edison - 104
Belvedere - 49
Brooklyn - 177
Cherry Hill - 196
McElderry Park - 107
Franklin Square - 114
Park Heights - 54
Penn-North - 127
Sandtown - 110
Woodbourne - 66
<b>Total – 1,104</b>

### What are the challenges to meeting goals?

Safe Streets has expanded from four sites and 32 staff to ten sites and 76 staff, not including Hospital Responders. Despite this expansion, the administrative team still consists of just three people. The program hires unique community members who have many professional development needs. Many of the community-based organizations who hire the staff directly require much of the administrative teams' time for capacity building and technical assistance, which reduces the City's ability to train and monitor the efficacy of the work on the ground.

Inadequate staffing of the administrative team has resulted in capacity challenges that have slowed the program expansion, reduced oversight, and jeopardized funding streams. Safe Streets Baltimore also requires in-house resources to access housing, workforce development, employment opportunities, substance use treatment, and mental health supports. Currently, the program relies heavily on each community-based organization that is selected to directly employ the staff to provide connections to these resources, which has resulted in inconsistency across the program regarding supports available to the community. Additionally, training costs need to be built permanently into the operating costs of Safe Streets budget. Examples of training needs for staff include interruption and outreach worker training, financial literacy, in-house GED classes, computer classes, and trauma-informed care training.

Safe Streets is starting an intensive internal evaluation to identify ways to improve the levels of service and outcome provided by the ten sites. Using state funds, MONSE has contracted with Dr. Joseph Richardson, Acting Chair of the African-American Studies Department at the University of Maryland, and Dr. Daniel Webster, Director of the Center for Gun Violence Prevention and Policy at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, to also evaluate Safe Streets and recommend steps for updating the model and integrating an improved Safe Streets into an ecosystem of care to address violence in our communities.

### **Group Violence Reduction Strategy**

In partnership with BPD and the State's Attorney's Office, MONSE is preparing to launch the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS). This proven strategy aims to address the norms perpetuating violence in Baltimore by focusing resources on individuals identified as being at the highest acute risk of involvement in non-fatal shootings and homicides. GVRS, also known as focused deterrence, is a nationally recognized approach that has the strongest formal evaluation record of any violence prevention initiative designed to reduce homicides and non-fatal shootings.

In 2020, MONSE, SAO, and BPD announced plans to jointly implement the strategy in Baltimore City. In addition to BPD shifting significant resources to the tune of seven figures to properly staffing the strategy, nearly \$900,000 has been raised from the philanthropic community specifically for GVRS implementation. Funders include Baltimore Community Foundation, Abell, Goldseker, Annie E. Casey, Open Society Institute, and Johns Hopkins University. A portion of these funds are going to local community-based organizations focused on providing intensive services to individuals identified as the highest risk of being involved in gun violence.

An additional \$2.9 million is being spent in just the first year of GVRS through a combination of city, state, and federal Project Safe Neighborhood funds. Of the \$2.9 million, \$2.1 million is going to Youth Advocate Programs and ROCA, our primary service partners. The remaining funds support MONSE's oversight and coordination efforts, technical assistance from the nation's best experts, and training needs.

GVRs cannot be classified as an alternative to policing strategy since it requires difficult intelligence-led policing and enforcement, but this strategy is successful when properly implemented because it leverages an intentional collaboration between law enforcement, social services, and community members, who collectively co-sign and deliver the anti-violence message. The success of GVRs hinges on the partnership's ability to correctly and effectively deliver this message, which has three core parts:

- Everybody needs and deserves to be safe;
- There's a very small number of people in the affected communities at extremely high risk for violent victimization and, sometimes, violent offending. GVRs is designed to keep them safe, alive, and free;
- GVRs puts together an intense focus on that small number of people in order to support them in their daily lives, communicate community norms in support of everybody's safety and success, and where necessary create swift, certain, and legitimate sanctions for violence.

In partnership with SAO and BPD, MONSE submitted a request to Senator Van Hollen to allocate funds to GVRs from the Congressional District Spending program. We will continue to engage the philanthropic community and apply for federal grants to support the strategy.

### **Coordination Efforts**

While Safe Streets and the Group Violence Reduction Strategy are MONSE's two high-profile violence reduction strategies, it's important to note that part of MONSE's daily work is to engage, empower, and align public agencies and community partners—the whole weight of Baltimore—in the broader pursuit of increased public safety with more justice and less harm. The Public Safety Advisory Commission and Violence Prevention Task Force are just two examples of how MONSE views increased coordination and cooperation as necessary to improving public safety.

#### Public Safety Advisory Commission

Addressing historic distrust between community and police is essential for violence reduction. The Public Safety Advisory Commission is a diverse group of City residents from each police district, representatives from various communities such as the LGBTQ and Latinx communities, police officers, and government officials, including Chairman Conway. This new commission is tasked with building trust with all Baltimoreans, with an emphasis on improving interactions with marginalized communities. City Council will receive a report on November 15, 2021 with recommendations about improving interactions and relationships with police officers and youth, returning citizens, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ and Latinx communities, public housing and unhoused residents, and victims of domestic violence. The report will also provide ideas for resident-involved training of police officers, partnering with HBCUs, and increasing recruitment of City residents as police officers.

#### Violence Prevention Task Force

In order to sustainably reduce gun violence and address its root causes, the City Council led by the then Council President Brandon M. Scott passed the Biennial Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan Ordinance 20.364B on May 18, 2020. The Ordinance mandated the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) to develop a comprehensive violence prevention plan that employs a public health approach and strategies that are trauma-informed, reduce harm, and heal individuals and communities.

On September 17, 2020, Baltimore City Commissioner of Health, Letitia Dzirasa, MD, convened the Violence Prevention Task Force (VPTF). Over the course of eight sessions, Baltimore City agencies and

organizations, state agencies, and federal government technical assistance partners developed a Violence Prevention Framework. This framework helped inform MONSE's Violence Prevention Strategic Plan, a draft of which was previously shared with the City Council and we look forward to sharing the final version in the coming weeks.

BCHD has turned over the responsibility of managing the VPTF to MONSE. We have expanded the VPTF membership beyond only the legislatively-mandated agencies to include other agencies, community partners, and residents. The first meeting of the expanded VPTF is scheduled for July 21, 2021. VPTF goals include implementing violence reduction strategies in collaboration with partner, provide ongoing training and technical assistance to programs and services, and collect data and review results from performance measures and indicators. This task force will provide an annual report for the Mayor, City Council, and the public.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S Jackson". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops for the letters "S" and "J".

Shantay A. Jackson  
Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

cc: Sunny Schnitzer, Deputy Mayor, Public Safety  
Nina Themelis, Legislative Liaison, Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations