



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 358 -- VICTIM'S RIGHTS RESTITUTION

February 4, 2020

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

House Bill 358 makes victim restitution payments mandatory by stipulating that a court shall enter a judgment that orders a defendant to make restitution in addition to any other penalty for the commission of a crime or delinquent act. Current law gives a court discretion to order restitution payments.

Improving public safety and reducing violent crime have been identified by the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) as the most important issues facing Baltimore City. The GBC has recommended a two-pronged approach to reduce violent crime and address the root causes of crime because there is a direct relationship between public safety and economic opportunity.

Lawmakers have an opportunity to not only address criminal laws affecting repeat violent offenders, but also to strengthen those crime-related issues such as witness intimidation and the rights afforded to victims of crime. In particular, the current laws regarding victim's rights restitution do not serve as a strong enough deterrent from criminal activity or protection for a victim of crime. By making victim restitution mandatory, victims are properly protected and a stronger deterrence is created.

Victims and their families often suffer a myriad of financial losses due to criminal conduct. These expenses can include funeral costs, lost wages, medical and counseling expenses, lost or damaged property, and other indirect out-of-pocket expenses. While strengthening the rights of victims for restitution may not stop violent crime, it is good public policy to better equip victims to recover from financial losses that they suffered through no direct fault of their own.

Additionally, this bill is consistent with the GBC's *2020 Legislative Priorities*, which states that, "policymakers must join together in a coordinated approach that reduces violent crime while simultaneously addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, joblessness and a lack of education or workforce training." House Bill 358 is an important step in regard to addressing some of the most pressing public safety issues by creating additional deterrence to violent crime and helping innocent victims of criminal conduct.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 358.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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