



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**SB 893
Support**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 15, 2022

SB 893 Public Safety - Safer Communities Fund and Task Force - Establishment

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The City of Takoma Park supports SB 893, which establishes state-level funding to support local-level, non-carceral approaches to public safety. A fund to provide grant assistance to local governments to promote robust and holistic investments in non-carceral public safety is exactly what is needed in communities right now.

Communities are increasingly exploring non-police, non-carceral approaches to public safety, but to be successful those approaches require financial support. The pandemic and economic conditions have driven an increase in violent crime, at the same time that cities reimagine how they approach public safety in light of a long history of mass incarceration and often discriminatory, violent policing approaches. Research supports that public space changes can deter crime, including investing in street lighting and community changes.

The Takoma Park City Council recently initiated a Reimagining Public Safety Task Force process that resulted in 50 recommendations for the City to take a more holistic approach to public safety, including recommendations to refer non-police calls to mental health or other services. The City is also developing a public space management plan and plans for hiring mental health counselors to respond to mental health calls, among other reimagining public safety efforts.

Providing a base of public funding for cities to pursue mental health and public design approaches to public safety can spur cities to explore and adopt non-policing approaches, without trading off from other funding priorities at a time when many residents are struggling.

Takoma Park therefore supports SB 893. Funding opportunities at the State level for these types of public safety programs that align with non-carceral approaches beyond police crisis interventions would be especially beneficial in light of our ongoing City initiatives.