



## SB 367 – SUPPORT

March 3, 2020

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

The Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs serves more than 23,000 youth at 42 Club sites across the state. Boys & Girls Clubs aim to provide a high-quality Club experience that assures success is within reach of every young person who enters our doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school and plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and living a healthy lifestyle. We aim to provide a safe and positive environment – and a hot, nutritious meal at no cost – for youth after school and during the summer.

The Maryland Alliance strongly **supports SB367: State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach**, which would create a trauma-informed schools initiative within the Maryland State Department of Education to expand the use of a trauma-informed approach in schools, intensively train schools on becoming trauma-informed, develop guidelines to assist schools, and create a fund to carry out this work.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America recognizes the lasting impacts of childhood trauma, and the need for Clubs to consider trauma in their youth development work. More than two thirds of children experienced at least one traumatic event by age 16; these could include physical or emotional abuse, loss, neglect, or other household dysfunction. Many youth serving organizations are responding by providing trauma-informed care. This is defined as an organizational perspective and practice that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma by integrating trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills into organizational cultures, practices and policies.

In order for the Boys & Girls Clubs of American to meet our mission of enabling all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens, we also support Clubs integrating foundational trauma informed approaches. Given the role Clubs play in communities – sometimes directly located in a school or near school property, and the professional skills and expertise of many Club staff, below are BGCA’s key recommendations for integrating trauma informed practice into Club environments. BGCA recognizes that the role of the Club is not to provide counseling or social work services on their own, unless specifically provided by an expert hired on to serve in this role. BGCA can integrate foundational approaches derived from trauma informed care, serving to benefit all youth, not just those who have experienced trauma. Each of the approaches outlined below are within the scope of the Club’s role, and the capacity of youth development professionals:

- Environments: Club leaders and staff can create environments that support physical and emotional safety and prioritize social-emotional skill-building opportunities.
- Review and develop policies that include components of positive behavior support, rather than disciplinary actions, train staff in their consistent use, and communication commitment from leadership.
- Leverage a youth’s concerning behavior as an opportunity to build social-emotional skills through identifying feelings and providing time and space for de-escalation and self-regulation
- Create physical Club spaces that give youth opportunities to calm down.
- Implement programs that support social and emotional skill building, and utilize facilitation approaches that prioritize safety and support youth who have experienced trauma.



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
MARYLAND ALLIANCE

Expanding how we integrate a trauma-informed approach within our education system is critical to successful social and emotional development of Maryland's youth. According to the Treatment and Services Adaptation Center, one out of every four children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior. Equipping schools and educators with the tools to address learning and behavior challenges through a trauma-informed lens will play an important component to ensuring equitable outcomes for all of Maryland's youth. In addition, establishing guidelines, training educators and providing support to schools for implementation are key for sustainable implementation across the state.

As the Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs works hard to support the needs of the kids and communities we serve, we thank Sen. Washington and Del. Wilkins for introducing this legislation and stand ready to serve as a resource to promote trauma-informed approaches in our educational and out-of-school time systems. We ask for a favorable report on SB 367.

Sincerely,

Andy Hoffman  
President  
Maryland Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs

Contact: Moira Cyphers, Compass Government Relations  
[MCyphers@compass-gr.com](mailto:MCyphers@compass-gr.com)  
(301) 318-4220