



Across the country, millions of children experience or witness domestic violence, substance abuse, housing insecurity, food insecurity, racism and other profound social challenges that impact their physical health, emotional well-being and ability to thrive. The lasting negative effects of these and other types of Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, affect nearly two-thirds of children in the U.S. before the age of 18. These negative experiences can follow children throughout their lives, affecting their health, educational and economic opportunities.

Kaiser Permanente has researched adverse childhood experiences and their impact on health care outcomes for decades. In 1995, Kaiser Permanente partnered with the Center for Disease Control to conduct one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and household challenges and later-life health and well-being. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study provided the foundation for additional research, advocacy and education.

The Center for Disease Control's 2019 report on preventing ACEs cites a large and growing body of research that indicates the profound and lasting effects of trauma during childhood on the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, as well as the brain, affecting attention, impulsive behavior, decision making, emotion and response to stress. Incorporating a trauma-informed approach in education can help build the resiliency of students, teachers and staff helping to mitigate the life-long negative impacts of trauma and ACES.

Kaiser Permanente is grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 367 to establish the Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative. We applaud Maryland lawmakers' actions to support children who experience ACEs by developing a trauma-informed approach for schools.

Teachers often fill the vital role of building caring adult relationships with their students that are critical to combatting the effects of childhood trauma. SB 367 will provide support for teachers and other school-based role models to understand and respond to students who have experienced trauma or traumatic stress. When teachers, staff members and administrators are trained in a comprehensive trauma-informed policy, they are better equipped to provide the support needed to build resiliency in youth experiencing trauma. Trauma informed teachers and staff will be able to recognize the symptoms of trauma and ACES and respond appropriately to support students, reduce the risk of re-traumatization, and mitigate their own vicarious trauma. This bill will provide the proper framework and education for educators, both of which are critical to building capacity to support our students.

SB 367 advocates an approach that will actively address the pervasive issue of trauma and traumatic stress that many of our students face. Kaiser Permanente strongly urges the committee to support the passage of SB 367, which has the potential to create brighter, more positive, and more equitable futures for the children of Maryland.