



SB367– State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs – March 3, 2020
Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Executive Director Baltimore Child Abuse Center
Position: **SUPPORT**

Baltimore Child Abuse Center (BCAC), Maryland’s first and oldest children’s advocacy center, supports SB367, which would expand the use of trauma-informed approaches used in schools. BCAC, a subsidiary of LifeBridge Health, is a nationally accredited trauma-informed organization, that, among other things, trains youth serving organizations to recognize and respond to adverse childhood experiences. (ACEs).

Early intervention helps combat ACEs -Adverse Childhood Experiences. Decades of research shows us that ACEs like witnessing community violence or experiencing abuse affects a child’s brain development, and ultimately can lead to poor outcomes in school like lack of attention, repeating a grade, dropping out or being incarcerated. ACEs can also ultimately lead to poor health outcomes like addiction, disease and even early death. The opposite is also true: addressing childhood trauma early can lead to a better life. With the right adult support, kids can heal and thrive.

School communities have an important responsibility to provide trauma-informed responses. Being trauma-informed in schools means being informed about and sensitive to trauma, and providing a safe, stable, and understanding environment for students and staff. It approaches kids not with a “What’s wrong with you?” but with “What happened to you?” Schools can create quiet corners for reflection, practice mindfulness, have morning check-ins, promote resiliency and have access to trauma-certified mental health professionals when needed. Trauma professionals also know that trauma is a process, and kids might not be ready to talk about it for months or years.

Trauma response in Baltimore schools. Nationally, about 20% of children have 2 or more ACEs; in Baltimore City over 30% of children have two or more ACEs. Children entering foster care and seen at the BCAC have 6 -7 ACEs. Baltimore City Schools reportedly received the U.S. Department of Education’s Promoting Student Resilience Grant to develop an intervention model for 13 focus schools that were most impacted by the civil unrest following the death of Freddy Gray. (Pickens and Tschopp, *Trauma-Informed Classrooms*, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2017).

Handle with Care. With the help of the Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Baltimore City launched a local pilot of Maryland’s Handle with Care program in fall 2019. The program convenes law enforcement, schools and providers to confidentially signal that a child has experienced an unnamed traumatic event and should be handled with care, not punished. SB367 supports and expands this important program.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB367.



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