



## Testimony in Support of Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach

### HB 277/SB 367

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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence is a local, grassroots organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries throughout the state of Maryland, with a particular focus on reducing urban gun violence and gun suicide. **We urge the committee to support House Bill 277/SB 367 to establish the trauma-informed school initiative in the State Department of Education.**

Experts in the field of violence reduction know that trauma is a driving force behind much of the everyday violence in this country and especially in our cities. As Thomas Abt states in his book, *Bleeding Out*, "It is hard to overstate the salience and ubiquity of trauma when you work in the field of violence prevention. It touches everything and everyone." A large body of research has found that youth who suffer from chronic exposure to violence are 32 times more likely to become violence offenders.

In one study of recent releasees from Massachusetts state prison, 50% reported being beaten by their parents, 40 % had witnessed someone being killed, 30 % had endured family violence, and 16% had been sexually abused. The long-term damage caused by a childhood filled with this kind of violence is well-documented. The toxic stress which is activated when a body is exposed to trauma for too long or too frequently, leads to a situation where the child's brain stays on alert, continuously flooding the body with stress hormones. Such experiences are strongly associated with delinquent, criminal, and violent behavior in adolescence and adulthood.

Adequately and early approaching children who have been exposed to these life altering events with trauma-informed care is a critical component to helping them to fight the above statistics which in turn is critical to stopping the cycle of violence affecting our communities. MPGUV urges your support to House Bill 277/Senate Bill 367 to establish the Trauma-Informed School Initiative in the State Department of Education.