

**Senate Bill 367 State Department of Education –
Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach**
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2020
Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is the state's only volunteer, nonprofit citizen's organization that brings together consumers, families, professionals, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and mental illness. We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 367.

SB 367 establishes a trauma-informed schools initiative, program and fund.

About 50% of children are exposed to a traumatic event, and as many as 67% of trauma survivors experience lasting psychosocial impairment. Trauma can affect a child's brain and delay certain development which can make it harder for the child to concentrate and study. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and the Family Informed Trauma Treatment Center in Maryland, nearly one-third of children in Baltimore City have two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These ACEs have been found to have a direct impact on the normative development and lifelong health of individuals. ACE's include extreme poverty, family problems, experiencing or witnessing violence, abuse and discrimination. All of these can be extremely traumatic for children. ACEs are a significant risk factor for mental health and substance use disorders and can impact prevention efforts.

SB 367 seeks to implement a Trauma-informed School Initiative that will acknowledge the widespread impact of trauma and understand the paths available for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma; infuses trauma information into school policies, procedures and practices; and works to avoid re-traumatization of students, teachers and staff. The bill also calls for a Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative within the Department to be responsible for developing guidelines on a trauma-informed approach to help schools identify a student, teacher or staff member who has experienced trauma and how to respond appropriately. The Department shall distribute guidelines and develop a website on the Trauma-Informed approach. Results shall be compiled each year between MDH and DHS and reported to the Governor over the next five years.

There has been a successful movement across the country with Trauma-Informed school initiatives. Schools are an important place to address trauma as students spend large amounts of time there and because exposure to trauma and ACEs can cause a decline in school performance.

For these reasons, MHAMD supports SB 367 and looks forward to the resulting data in an effort to decrease traumatization and increase success for this population of our students.

For more information, please contact Dan Martin at (410) 978-8865