



**2020 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 367 – State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 367 would establish a Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative in the State Department of Education (MSDE), require MSDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop guidelines and training for the initiative, set up a website, select pilot schools, assess expansion, establish a fund to support expansion and submit certain reports on the initiative.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) recognizes the lasting impact that childhood trauma has in the long-term health and development of a child and the benefits of early intervention. We support the efforts in SB 367 to address this issue. While MACHO believes SB 367 will develop a system to address issues associated with trauma, we recommend ensuring it compliments other Kirwan Commission related legislation to better coordinate and align comprehensive school health services in Maryland.

MACHO recommends review of the extensive existing curriculum and training in this area instead of developing brand new content and focus on developing implementation guidelines and rollout strategies. We support conducting a pilot to study effectiveness before implementing statewide and most importantly, securing adequate funding for successful rollout. Making information and resources available via a website will allow other schools not in the pilot to become familiar with the project.

Local Health Departments (LHDs) work closely with their local school systems and other community partners on a regular basis and reducing the negative impact of childhood trauma on our youth is a community priority. Intervening and providing supports as early as possible is critical to mitigating potential negative outcomes. Research shows that childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact on child development and put children at risk for unhealthy behaviors and long-term health risks. According to the Center for Youth Wellness, adverse experiences in childhood can lead to long-term health risks including several top public health concerns of adults such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, COPD, diabetes, Alzheimer’s and suicide. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 1 out of every 4 school-aged children has been exposed to a traumatic event. Schools have increasingly recognized the impact of traumatic stress on student learning and behavior. Several national organizations have published a variety of tools and resources for schools to identify and manage the impacts of traumatic stress within the school setting using trauma informed approaches. While not specified as “guidelines” as referred to SB 367, there are many resources available to implement trauma informed practices within the school setting. The resources include variety of strategies and frameworks endorsed or developed from nationally known experts and organizations.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this **letter of support for SB 367**. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-614-6891. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*