



NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE CENTER, INC.

Marilyn M. Neal, Executive Director

www.nsctalbotmd.org

**"Helping People
Changing Lives"**

126 Port Street
Easton, MD 21601
Phone: 410-822-5015
Fax: 410-822-1369

February 29, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

Re: Written Testimony in Support of ENOUGH Act SB482

I am writing on behalf of Neighborhood Service Center, Inc. ("NSC"), the designated Community Action Agency for Talbot County, Maryland, to express our endorsement of the ENOUGH (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households) Act.

Community Action Agencies like NSC aim to engage the community, including elected officials, private sector representatives, and particularly low-income residents, in identifying local needs and addressing the root causes of poverty.

Currently, 9.3% of the overall population in Talbot County lives below the poverty line. These households struggle to afford basic necessities such as food, childcare, healthcare, housing, transportation, civic engagement, and access to mobile and internet services.

While the Act is intended for communities with a **poverty rate of 20%**, Talbot County harbors several Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed "ALICE" Households (households that earned above the FPL but not enough to afford the basic in the communities where they live), with notably high percentages obscured by the general poverty rate in various regions. For example: Easton was listed at 36% below the ALICE Threshold with 10,447 households; McDaniel at 38% with 108 households; Royal Oak at 30% with 231 households; St. Michaels at 33% with 1,635 households; Tilghman at 50% with 380 households; Trappe at 50% with 1,431 households; and Wittman at 36% with 204 households. However it is important to note that overall, 35% or 16,251 of All Talbot Houeholds are Alice. Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2007-2018; American Community Survey, 2007-2018; unitedforalice.org.

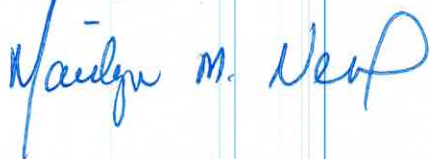
Additionally, the child poverty rate across Talbot County was estimated at 13.3% in 2022 by the US Census Bureau. Moreover, while Child Insecurity and Hunger in Talbot were reported at 16.8% by Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap in 2019. In Talbot County, 39% of students are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced price meal program and 4.6% of students are English Language learners.

Neighborhood Service Center, Inc. strongly endorses the pursuit of the ENOUGH Act as a potential source for the Anti-Poverty Fund. The Act's focus on advancing community well-being and safety, providing comprehensive education and assistance, improving access to high-quality employment, and guaranteeing financial stability and essential services for families, demonstrates a comprehensive and forward-thinking strategy to bolstering the welfare of children. This is vital for the State and Talbot County, where a significant disparity exists between the cost of living and prevailing wages.

For any inquiries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 822-5015 or via email at mneal@nsctalbotmd.org.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn M. Neal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first "l" in "Neal".

Marilyn M. Neal
Executive Director