

Testimony in Support of the ENOUGH Act

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

To: Chairman Feldman and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Associations of Local Management Boards, we are in support of the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (ENOUGH) Act of 2024.

As the Local Management Board Coordinator for St. Mary's County, it is exciting to support an initiative to address multi-generational poverty. Historically, Local Management Boards have been the caretakers of The Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund ensuring State dollars are strategically invested in local needs, such as addressing child poverty. Research shows children living in poverty experience daily impacts such as hunger, illness, insecurity, and instability but they also are more likely to experience low academic achievement, obesity, behavioral problems, as well as social emotional developmental difficulties. Increased stressors are a known causal factor through which poverty impacts developmental outcomes. As a natural convenor, Local Management Boards, bring together community stakeholders – government entities, public agencies, non-profits, and local citizens to address these concerns. To find what is working and what is not. And I think we can all agree, children living in poverty does not work.

During fiscal year 2024, St. Mary's County's Local Management Board voted to partner with St. Mary's County Department of Social Services in efforts to start a local chapter of Circles USA. Circles USA is a national evidence based program that supports families overcoming barriers as they move out of a culture of poverty and into a culture of prosperity. Through braided funding, this place based collaborative strategy has brought together community leaders from government, education, the nonprofit sector, businesses, and faith-based organizations utilizing collective impact strategies. Families, identified as Leaders, along with Community volunteers, identified as Allies, work together to navigate the complex social systems of care to get the individualized services they need to break the cycle of poverty. This is no easy task, but we believe this radical approach through community buy-in, intentional relationships, and a little Southern Maryland charm, this will work.

The St. Mary's County Local Management Board, along with the other 24 Boards in the State, understands the critical role of community voice in identifying needs but more importantly implementing appropriate strategies to address those needs. Every community has its unique needs. Local Management Boards are the through line for the ENOUGH Act. Behavioral and Mental Health, education, food security, housing, safety, and other issues

directly impact child poverty. Many of these topics have dedicated funding streams to support local efforts. The ENOUGH Act offers a unique opportunity to intentionally and strategically braid and blend these efforts to increase efficiency and effectiveness. This initiative will only enhance what Local Management Boards have been doing for over thirty years.

We urge you to support the ENOUGH Act of 2024 to end child poverty in Maryland.

Respectfully,

Amanda K. Meatyard

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St. Mary's County Local Management Board Coordinator