

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 482

Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)

TO: Hon. Ben Barnes, Chair, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 26, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 482 which would establish the Governor's Office for Children and the ENOUGH Grant program.**

The purpose of ENOUGH grant awards is to increase community health and safety; provide access to high-quality education and care; connect residents to quality jobs and in-demand occupations; and provide high-quality support for children with disabilities, child welfare, and justice involved youth and young adults.

High rates of child poverty impose a massive cost on society. Some of the costs is more readily quantifiable, such as higher healthcare costs, and costs associated with crime, homelessness, and child maltreatment. Others are not so easily assessed, such as the emotional harm, mental health struggles, and generational trauma that affects children trapped in poverty. But the simplest measure of child poverty can be measured in the disparity between the earning potential for people who have experienced poverty as children compared to those who did not. [For adults who experienced poverty during childhood in the United States, their earnings were reduced by a total of \\$294 billion compared to adults who did not experience poverty during childhood in 2015.](#) Some estimates claim that in total, child poverty cost the United States [\\$1 trillion dollars](#), or 5.4 percent of gross domestic product that same year.

Senate Bill 482 is critical to helping Maryland and especially Baltimore City achieve stability and economic success. These grants are vital investments that will help vulnerable populations gain access to quality jobs and job training programs. The key to for any region to reach its potential requires the empowerment of its most vulnerable populations, and establishing the Governor's Office for Children and the ENOUGH Grant program will have a monumental impact in that regard.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 482 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org