



February 11, 2021

Support for SB 299

Human Services - Trauma-Informed Care - Commission and Training

Senator Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), we would like to express our support for Senate Bill 299, Human Services - Trauma-Informed Care - Commission and Training.

Trauma-Informed Care acknowledges that everyone might have experienced past trauma and seeks to avoid re-traumatization by providing clients and staff with choice, safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment. Importantly, it also means providing services that are culturally relevant and acknowledge the historical trauma and structural racism experienced by different populations in the United States.

Trauma-Informed services can be provided in any health or human services setting, and this bill recognizes the importance of trauma-informed care for a variety of populations across Maryland including children, youth, families, and older adults who receive state sponsored or state funded services. Traumatic experiences can be many different things. Childhood abuse, domestic violence, accidents, sexual assault, the unexpected death of a loved one, natural disasters are among the many traumas older adults may have experienced throughout their lives. Just because someone has experienced trauma does not mean they will have adverse reactions, but experiencing one or more traumatic events is associated with poorer health, more functional difficulties, poorer self-esteem, irritability, among other things. In severe cases trauma results in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

While exact rates of trauma are difficult to estimate, experts agree that it is relatively common in the U.S. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that 60% of men and 51% of women have experienced at least one trauma, and of those who have experienced one trauma, many have experienced more than one. The greater the number or severity of traumas someone has experienced, the worse the impacts are likely to be. Age by itself is a risk factor for trauma- being older means you have had more time for traumas to occur by chance. In one survey of Americans in their 60's found that these older adults had experienced an average of six traumatic events in their lifetime (Ogle, Rubin, & Siegler, 2014). This is nearly twice the average found in studies using adults of all ages (Kessler et al., 2017).

As social workers who work with older adults, we see many clients who have experienced traumatic events, some recently, as a result of aging related challenges, others who continue to

suffer ill effects of long-ago traumas, and still others who have experienced both. Those traumas make it harder to get people the essential services they need. Trauma informed services create a better experience for clients and workers. Better engagement makes services more accepted and accessible. This bill would provide an opportunity to evaluate how our state is doing at providing trauma-informed services and the opportunity to improve those services.

The recommendations of the commission would allow for better laws to serve children, youth, families, and older adults in the state of Maryland. The formal training this bill would provide would allow every agency to have employees that are knowledgeable about both trauma-informed care and the agency structure, allowing them to help infuse trauma-informed care across all agency practices.

Many trauma survivors struggle every day to get through life. They shouldn't have to struggle to get state funded health and human services. Make Maryland a leader in Trauma-informed care and give state workers the training they need to provide these services.

We urge you to vote YES on SB 299.

Thank you,

NASW-MD Committee on Aging

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