

Date: March 23, 2021

Bill: Senate Bill 299, Human Services – Trauma-Informed Care- Commission and Training

Position: Support

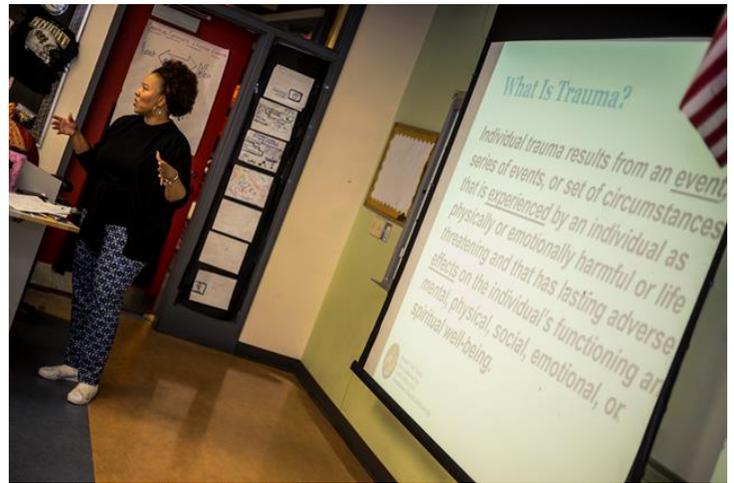
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Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **Senate Bill 299, Human Services-Trauma-Informed Care- Commission and Training**, which will create a State Commission on Trauma-Informed Care Under the Department of Human Services, to prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of state services that impact children, youth, families, and older adults.

As a Baltimore nonprofit organization, the National Aquarium has a vested interest in the well-being of its neighboring communities. According to the Baltimore City Office of Children and Family Success, 42% of Baltimore City Children will experience 3+ traumatic events before reaching adulthood. As a city-wide response to the exceeding high levels of trauma, Baltimore City adopted the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act (February 2020).

As a complement to this trauma responsiveness, the Baltimore City Connecting Children Nature Initiative (BCCCN) - lead by Baltimore Office of Sustainability, Baltimore Recreation and Parks, Baltimore City Public Schools, and the National Aquarium; focuses on increasing equitable access to nature as an avenue to address trauma in children and youth. Research has shown that time spent outdoors, in nature, is incredibly beneficial to the mental, physical, and emotional health of children. Exposing youth to natural spaces can reduce stress levels, increase physical activity, support emotional regulation, and promote feelings of connectedness.



Caption: Participants of Baltimore's Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) [Nature Nurtures Symposium](#) received trauma-informed care training.

In March 2020 (pre-COVID-19), 159 members of the local health, early childcare, education, and environmental communities participated in the Nature Nurtures Symposium. Facilitated by BCCCN, the purpose of this event was to increase trauma-informed care training and practices amongst environmental and outdoor program providers, while simultaneously integrating nature-based practices and outside experiences into mental health care and formal education. The outcome of this trauma-informed care cross-training was to better equip those whose services impact children and youth with the necessary skills and tools to support those who may have experienced trauma; further increasing a child or youth's sense of physical, emotional, and mental safety.

On behalf of BCCCN, The National Aquarium urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on **SB 299** as it will allow Maryland to increase its state-wide trauma responsiveness, similarly to that of the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act, and support the overall well-being of children and youth.

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