



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 783

February 19, 2021

TO: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: HOUSE BILL 783 – Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports House Bill (HB) 783 with amendment.

This bill will establish the Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences, which will work toward the development of improved data tools, data gathering, and service delivery for minors having experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The Baltimore City Health Department's (BCHD) Office of Youth and Trauma Services works with individuals and families who have experienced ACEs, thus can proffer in-depth recommendations for the Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences. Research has shown that ACEs are correlated with negative health outcomes (such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease) as well as social behaviors (drug misuse, alcoholism, and tobacco use). It is imperative that ACEs are identified as early as possible and interventions be offered to reduce the impact of the trauma experienced. The ability to identify ACEs allows local and state governments to ensure services are not only provided but are also trauma-informed and healing-centered.

The Mayor's Office of Children & Family Success (MOCFS) supports the work of the Baltimore Children's Cabinet, and trauma-informed care is one of the Cabinet's seven priority areas. In this work, the Children's Cabinet is focusing on destigmatizing mental health care and improving the responsiveness of trauma-informed care by more systematized collection of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and resilience factors of youth. The Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences can

*Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov/>*

advance and complement the ongoing work of the Baltimore Children's Cabinet. The workgroup can learn from the successful ACEs Aware initiative in California, which aims to increase screening, treatment, & healing for adverse childhood experiences.

The passing of HB 783 will have several positive effects on agencies serving youth and families who have experienced ACEs. Data collection will allow agencies to understand the prevalence of trauma in the communities being served. By embedding trauma assessment into the medical evaluation and school forms, child serving systems will be able to understand the need for trauma-informed approaches and provide services using a data-driven approach. The prevalence of ACEs data collected by the Workgroup will also allow for the budgeting, hiring, and training of staff with a focus on addressing trauma-related symptoms as well as building protective factors. Finally, HB 783's focus on educating the public regarding the impact of adverse childhood experiences will further encourage a community-based response to building protective factors for children and youth, as well as attempting to decrease ACE-related risk factors.

This bill is a welcomed change to our current approach to ACEs, and BCA respectfully calls for a small amendment to include additional representation from local health departments, specifically those serving both rural and urban jurisdictions whose populations experience ACEs in a different manner.

Altogether, we respectfully request a **favorable with amendment** report on House Bill 783.