

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and well-being.

Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
Bill #HB 548: Human Services – Trauma-Informed Care – Commission and Training
Support

February 5, 2020

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful child welfare reform. CPMC **supports** passage of HB 548: Trauma-Informed Care – Commission and Training. CPMC recommends amending the bill to include the Executive Director of the Maryland State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect or the Executive Director's designee, as a member of the Commission as SCCAN together with its partners in Maryland Essentials for Childhood has been leading statewide efforts to prevent and mitigate childhood trauma and build resilience in children, families, communities and the agencies that serve them for more than a decade. CPMC also recommends adding a member of the Maryland Judiciary and members of the business, philanthropic, and faith-based communities in the list of Commission Members.

HB 548 would create a Commission on Trauma-Informed Care with the purpose of coordinating a statewide initiative to prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed services that impact children, youth, families, and older adults. Specific functions would include:

- (1) Developing a statewide strategy for government agencies to become trauma-responsive
- (2) Coordinating and developing with Maryland Department of Health trauma-informed care training
- (3) Disseminating information among agencies about best practices for preventing and mitigating the effects of trauma
- (4) Establishing an evaluation process and submitting an evaluation report for each agency
- (5) Advising and assisting the governor in providing oversight and accountability in implementing the requirements of the Commission
- (6) Making recommendations regarding improvements to existing laws relating to children, youth, families and older adults in Maryland

The legislation also mandates a process for making agencies trauma-informed.

Maryland's future depends on how well we support the healthy development of our youngest generation. The science around early childhood development makes clear that the earliest years of childhood are a time when the brain is rapidly building its architecture, with lightning speed proliferation of neural connections and circuits. The relationships and experiences that children have early in life in their families and communities are the building blocks for that brain development.

From the findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study and subsequent research, we understand that ACEs are common and have a strong cumulative impact on the risk of common health and social problems across the lifespan. The Maryland Department of Health has collected data on ACEs among Maryland residents through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This data demonstrates high rates of ACEs among Maryland residents.

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT					FAMILY DYSFUNCTION				
	Kaiser	MD BRFSS 2015 Data	MD BRFSS 2018 Data	MD YRBS 2018 Data		Kaiser	MD BRFSS 2015 Data	MD BRFSS 2018 Data	MD YRBS 2018 Data
Physical Abuse	28 %	16.9%	14.7%		Substance Abuse	27 %	24.9%	24.8%	22.4%
Sexual Abuse	21 %	11.1%	12%		Parental Separation/ Divorce	23 %	27.5%	29.1%	
Emotional Neglect	15 %				Mental Illness	17 %	15%	15.4%	26.1%
Emotional Abuse	11 %	31.2%	34%	18.1%	Battered Mother	13 %	17.4%	15.3%	
Physical Neglect	10 %				Criminal Behavior	6 %	7.6%	8.0%	22.4%

Childhood ACEs and other adversities have been shown to lead to underperformance in schools and in jobs, poor mental health, substance abuse, and a variety of adverse health outcomes across the lifespan. Therefore, multiple agencies across Maryland state government are currently and will, in the future, be faced with the repercussions of childhood trauma and adversity. When state agencies understand the effects of trauma and adversity and implement policies and procedures that effectively respond to mitigate the adverse effects, all Marylanders benefit. If policy makers across multiple agencies and sectors enact policies that prevent childhood adversities and mitigate their effects, each one of these problems will grow smaller.

It should be noted that Maryland’s current programs and policies to prevent and effectively respond to childhood trauma are minimal and fragmented across public and private agencies; with significant variation from system to system and from one local jurisdiction to the next. Many other states, including Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, Colorado, California, North Carolina, and Massachusetts, are developing a statewide, coordinated

approach to addressing childhood adversity and its impacts, While HB548 is an important first step toward addressing child trauma and adversity, additional efforts are needed to effectively address, mitigate, and prevent trauma and adversity among Maryland children.