

MALCOLM AUGUSTINE
Legislative District 47
Prince George's County

Finance Committee
Energy and Public Utilities Subcommittee

Senate Chair, Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3745 · 301-858-3745
800-492-7122 Ext. 3745
Fax 410-841-3387 · 301-858-3387
Malcolm.Augustine@senate.state.md.us

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SB 590 - Public Health - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System – Requirements

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Committee.

Senate Bill (SB) 590 establishing requirements related to the conduct of a survey as part of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and the reporting of summary data and trends reports.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) (2). This can include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home or community; substance abuse; mental health problems; etc. (2). It has been shown that ACEs are strongly associated, in a dose-response fashion, with some of the most common and serious health conditions facing our society, including nine out of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States (1).

ACEs can lead to activation of toxic stress response which is defined by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine as prolonged activation of the stress response that can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into the adult years (1). For children, the result is an increase in lifelong risk for physical and mental health disorders (1).

SB 590 aims to implement a survey as a part of the Maryland Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). This includes a Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) module on ACEs in at least one version of the survey. Additionally, counties at higher risk for adverse health outcomes would be oversampled to ensure accurate participation and data from said populations. Lastly, the CDC module data will be trended for analysis of ACEs or positive childhood experiences.

SB 590 is an important step in focusing Maryland's efforts on which children are most at risk for ACEs. With proper data collection, future steps can be taken to address upstream causes of ACEs in the communities most affected. Maryland's children deserve to grow in a community that aims to minimize adverse experiences, and SB 590 is an integral part in creating a safe environment for all.

References

1. Bhushan, Devika, et al. "The Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General's Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health." 2020, <https://doi.org/10.48019/peam8812>.
2. CDC. "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 6 Apr. 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>.