

**Senate Bill 590 Public Health - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System - Requirements**

Senate Finance Committee

February 22, 2022

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health, mental illness and substance use. MHAMD appreciates this opportunity to present testimony in support of Senate Bill 590.

SB 590 would establish and expand requirements in conducting the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, along with the reporting of summary data and trends reports. It seeks to increase reporting on adverse childhood experiences and positive childhood experiences, and places weighted emphasis on regions in Maryland with higher reported adverse health outcomes.

The Maryland Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an ongoing telephone-based chronic disease surveillance program designed to collect data on the behaviors and conditions that place Maryland adults at risk for chronic diseases, injuries, and preventable infectious diseases. Maryland BRFSS also collects information on health care access and health disparities.<sup>1</sup>

About 50% of children are exposed to a traumatic event, and as many as 67% of trauma survivors experience lasting psychosocial impairment. Trauma can affect a child's brain and delay certain development which can make it harder for the child to concentrate and study. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and the Family Informed Trauma Treatment Center in Maryland, nearly one-third of children in Baltimore City have two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These ACEs have been found to have a direct impact on the normative development and lifelong health of individuals. ACEs include extreme poverty, family problems, experiencing or witnessing violence, abuse and discrimination. All of these can be extremely traumatic for children. ACEs are a significant risk factor for mental health and substance use disorders and can impact prevention efforts.

There has been a national public awareness campaign across the country to highlight the impact of ACEs on children and youth. SB 590 moves the state to act by putting increased attention and resourcing on these early indicators of long-term behavioral health outcomes. For these reasons, MHAMD urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 590.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Health, "Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System."  
<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/brfss.aspx>

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