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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SENATE BILL 282- Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

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

Senate Bill (SB) 282 creates a workgroup on screening related to adverse childhood experiences screening.

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 ten 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).

SB282 aims to understand how ACEs are impacting Maryland's youth. The bill includes not only screening practices to gather data on ACEs, but initial recommendations on interventions to mitigate occurrence/reoccurrence of ACEs. SB282 is the first step in a longer plan to create lasting cross-sector infrastructure to curtail ACEs within Maryland. It allows us to understand the impact of ACEs on our communities: without proper data collection on the scope of the problem, there is no way of knowing when, where, and how to intervene regarding ACEs. Once proper data is collected, plans for effective intervention strategies (i.e., effective intervention systems for breaking intergenerational trauma, parental social support, mental health infrastructure, etc.) can be implemented appropriately. Screening is an important element of the process and this bill aims to move that forward within the context of Maryland's unique health system.

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>.