



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 694

ENOUGH Act of 2024

TO: Hon. Ben Barnes, Chair, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

DATE: February 28, 2024

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Consultant

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF) advocates for legislative initiatives to strengthen urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success. CFUF supports House Bill 694 to establish the network needed to eradicate poverty in Baltimore.

The Center for Urban Families hosts the Baltimore Communities Assisting and Advancing Neighbors (BCAAN) program, currently sponsored by the Robin Hood Foundation, to fight poverty throughout Baltimore City with an emphasis on the following neighborhoods: Penn North, Reservoir Hill, Auchentoroly Terrace, Whittier-Monroe, Greater Mondawmin, Druid Heights, and Woodbrook/Parkview.

BCAAN is part of a \$25 million strategic collaboration among national and regional philanthropic partners, which has spurred the development of new solutions to sustainably lift families out of poverty and promote dynamic leaders who will aim to change the national conversation around social and economic mobility. Its ideas and projects were inspired by an advisory council of residents and 20 community organizations who designed the change they would like to see: a resurrection of hope, steppingstones for economic growth, lifting leaders from within the community, carrying out programs and investments in ways that respect community members, better access to resources and opportunities, access to healthy and nutritious food, and a reduction in violence to make Greater Penn North a safer place for all community members.

From 2022 - 2023, BCAAN worked with 286 community members who participated in leadership and advocacy training or received case management services, including referrals and emergency assistance resources. We conducted 28 one-day workshops covering 17 topics related to advocacy, including interacting with local government, communicating across different generations, advocating for their families, and preserving Black mental health. Our outreach coordinator continued to build relationships with the community and connect residents to resources and programming while remaining flexible. Due to community feedback, BCAAN designed nine additional leadership and advocacy workshops on topics of interest to residents (such as advocating within your school). All workshops were “earn while you learn,” which offered stipends and meals to residents for participation. We also met with the advisory council to maintain a feedback loop on our activities. Finally, through our advisory council,



we developed a community-grant-making process to fund resident-supported projects (a list of said projects is below).

Passing the ENOUGH Act will allow CFUF to partner with the state to continue the BCAAN program on a grander scale. We firmly believe the Governor's mantra "that those closest to the problem are, indeed, closest to the solution," and the BCAAN program's success proves it. Having worked with Wes Moore on this issue before his election via his work at the Robin Hood Foundation, the Center for Urban Families is uniquely positioned to move the ball forward on eradicating poverty in Maryland using education, proper distribution of resources, and community engagement. We hope to continue our partnership with the Governor and the newly crafted Governor's Office for Children as we tackle the lasting effects of generational poverty in Maryland. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

PROGRAMS FUNDED THROUGH BCAAN

St. Francis Neighborhood Association \$25,000

Project: The Power Project (PP), an innovative youth development and education-based afterschool/Out of School Time (OST) program provided at no cost to those who live, work, worship, or study in the 21217-zip code with an emphasis and focus on the members of the Reservoir Hill and Penn North communities, seeking to serve 125-150 students each school year.

Penn North Recovery Center- \$25,000

Project: The Clean Sweep Youth Project aims to engage 20-30 boys and girls ages 14-18 by empowering youth and promoting cleanliness and safety on our streets. Each participant in the Clean Sweep Youth Project will have access to services, including GED preparation, TABE testing, job readiness training, resume building, identity document assistance, and an incentive program, which will motivate and reward everyone who participates in the Clean Sweep Youth Project.

HER Resiliency Center-\$15,000

Project: HER Resiliency Center's Different Path Program will serve vulnerable, victimized, and marginalized women in the Greater Penn North Community through a holistic model, providing street outreach and intensive support to 40 women during the one-year grant period who desire assistance in changing their lives.



Cloverdale AC-BBA, Inc. -\$15,000

Project: The weekend co-ed basketball league, consisting of 6-8 teams, will cater to middle-school youth ages 10 -15 years, providing 10 hours of organized activity, including basketball practice and socio-emotional and youth leadership workshops, lunch, and afternoon basketball games, promoting physical health and social connections.

No Boundaries Coalition \$25,000

Project: No Boundaries Coalition will host two cohorts of Leadership Academy from August 2023 to July 2024. The Leadership Academy will be a 12-week classroom-style program that teaches civic and community engagement. Upon graduation, leaders will be eligible for both a mini-grant

opportunity and completion of a paid year of service to apply the skills learned in the program within Penn North and surrounding communities.

KEYS Empowers, Inc. \$15,000

Project: KEYS will assist 30-40 families of the Greater Penn North Community who: Need assistance with curving learning gaps caused by COVID-19; Interested in attending programs for higher education or vocational training; Interested in exploring a hobby or trade to create economic stability and self-fulfillment through case management and individualized educational and financial supports.

Social and Economic Empowerment through Knowledge (SEEK)- \$15,000

Project: The Entrepreneurship 10.0 Program equips participants with the knowledge, resources, and support necessary to navigate the entrepreneurial journey successfully. By the program's end, 10 participants will have acquired a Maryland registered business, an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for their business from the IRS, and the guidance of a dedicated business mentor from SCORE.

Arch Social Community Network \$25,000

Project: Arch Social Youth and Young Adult preparatory programs, providing weekly sessions to learn and participate in educational, cultural, and volunteering activities with a mission to continue to prepare and train 18 young adults ages 14- 24 on the importance of physical and mental health, self-governance, financial literacy, community service, and project development