



Monday, February 26, 2024

Re: support for House Bill 694, the ENOUGH Act of 2024

Dear Honorable Chair and members of the committee,

On behalf of Anne Arundel Community Action Agency, I urge you to support House Bill 694, the ENOUGH Act of 2024, with proposed amendments.

The Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency has been the county's designated anti-poverty agency since 1965, with its mission "to assist people living in poverty working to achieve self-sufficiency and economic mobility by collaborating with community partners." Agency programs are a demonstrated pipeline to increase optimal outcomes across several well-being domains.

The key provisions outlined in SB482/HB694 present a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to tackling child poverty in our state. The creation of the Governor's Office for Children, led by the Special Secretary, provides a dedicated focal point for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by children and families.

The ENOUGH Grant Program, with its focus on place-based strategies, is a commendable effort to address child poverty at its roots. By targeting communities with over 20% child poverty, the bill ensures that resources are directed to those areas most in need. Anne Arundel County's Mariners Point neighborhood has an astonishing 83.9% of child poverty and several other neighborhoods in the county exceed well beyond 20%.

The purposes of ENOUGH grants, including promoting community health and safety, providing comprehensive education and care, facilitating access to quality jobs, and ensuring family-sustaining income and essential services, demonstrate a holistic and proactive approach to improving the well-being of children.

While we support the overall goals of the ENOUGH Act, we recommend an amendment to the legislation. Specifically, we propose that 50% of the funding allocated for the ENOUGH Act be made available

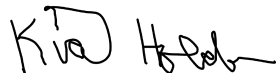
exclusively to existing Community Action Agencies, as identified by the Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP). Our agencies have a proven track record of effectively addressing community needs and are well-positioned to implement the objectives outlined in the bill.

These grants should be administered on a competitive basis, with entities following all guidelines established by the Governor's Office for Children. This amendment ensures that funds are directed to experienced organizations that have a history of successfully serving their communities.

We believe that this amendment will enhance the impact of the ENOUGH Act by leveraging the expertise and existing infrastructure of Community Action Agencies, ultimately contributing to a more targeted and efficient implemented program.

In conclusion, we express our support for SB482/HB694 - the ENOUGH Act of 2024, with the suggested amendment. We appreciate your consideration of this proposal, as it aims to further strengthen the effectiveness of the legislation. If there is any additional information that I can provide as you consider this bill, I would be happy to help. You can contact me at (410) 626-1900 ext. 1017 or kholder@aaccaa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kia Holder". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Kia Holder, Deputy Program Integrationist
Anne Arundel Community Action Agency
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Annapolis, MD 21401