

February 26, 2024

Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: In support of HB694, Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)

Dear Honorable Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

As Executive Director of Community Assistance Network, Inc. (CAN) and Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP), I am writing to express our support for House Bill 694, the ENOUGH Act of 2024, with proposed amendments.

The key provisions outlined in 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. 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.

MCAP agencies across the State are already implementing a Whole Family/2Gen approach to moving the multi-generational families we serve to self-sufficiency. In Baltimore County (CAN's jurisdiction) there are 49 census tracts where more than 20% of the children are living below the poverty rate. MCAP agencies such as CAN are well positioned to assist with the successful implementation of the ENOUGH Act's objectives.

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). These agencies have a proven track record of effectively addressing



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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 implementation of the program.

In conclusion, we express our support for 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mitchell Posner
Executive Director

P.S. If you should have any questions, you can reach out to our lobbyist, Darrell Carrington, Carrington & Associates, LLC, at darrell.carrington@verizon.net or 732-763-7398.