



Kennedy Krieger Institute

DATE: February 28, 2024 **COMMITTEE:** House Appropriations
BILL NO: House Bill 694
BILL TITLE: Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports the Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024).

Bill Summary:

House Bill 694 would establish the Governor's Office for Children and the ENOUGH Grant program. The purpose of ENOUGH grant awards is to increase community health and safety; provide access to high-quality education and care; connect residents to quality jobs and in-demand occupations; and provide high-quality support for children with disabilities, child welfare and justice involved youth and young adults.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based, and community-based programs. Over 27,000 individuals receive services annually at Kennedy Krieger.

The vision for the Office for Health Equity Inclusion and Diversity (O-HEID) at Kennedy Krieger Institute is to promote the health and well-being of those who work and receive training and services at Kennedy Krieger Institute. The O-HEID uses evidence, culturally relevant, and equity-based approaches that assures diversity and inclusion. The O-HEID is working to establish collaboration, data, and metrics to address remediable disparities within our patient populations, policies, and practices.

Rationale:

While 1 out of 8 children are living in poverty in Maryland, over a third of children in Baltimore City are affected and the numbers are rising.¹ Additionally, over half of students in Maryland's public schools qualify for free and reduced-priced meals.² Generally, children who live in areas of higher neighborhood deprivation live further away from pediatric hospitals.³ However, despite being located amongst some of the most prestigious medical facilities in the country, Baltimore City has one of the highest areas of deprivation in the state.⁴

Neighborhood deprivation is often associated with many issues affecting children including housing instability, childcare, and transportation.⁵ Neighborhood deprivation has also been associated with several types of health factors, including asthma,⁶ hearing loss,⁷ blood lead levels,⁸ body-mass index,⁹ severe COVID-19 infection,¹⁰ hospital re-admissions,¹¹ and developmental factors such as cognitive skills¹² and academic achievement.¹³ Our own Maryland high school youth living in areas of higher neighborhood deprivation have been found to have an increased likelihood of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as food insecurity, abuse, parental mental illness, parental substance abuse, or having a family member in jail or prison. Youth from Black, Hispanic/Latinx, or sexual and gender minority (SGM) backgrounds are most at risk.¹⁴

Growing up in poverty is a significant threat to healthy child development and increases the risk of poor academic, cognitive, and other health outcomes for children. As such, it is critical to address social determinants of health including economic, educational, and community environments in a targeted manner to break the

cycle of intergenerational poverty that is negatively affecting children across our state. We strongly believe that investing in Maryland's children will pay off in dividends and will truly unlock every child's potential.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 694.

References

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