

Testimony - HB 694, ENOUGH Act
Favorable
House Appropriations Committee
February 26, 2024
SEIU Local 500

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

We at SEIU Local 500 represent over 20,000 hardworking union members who serve the people in various roles from cradle to career. Many of our members come from working class backgrounds that began in the underserved communities the ENOUGH Act is meant to help. Living paycheck to paycheck is sadly a way of life in this nation, where many families cannot afford an emergency expense of a few hundred dollars. Systemic poverty is rampant in both urban and rural areas where outcomes in life can be correlated by zip code. These issues warrant action, and the ENOUGH Act is a good step towards addressing them.

Time and time again neighborhood-based solutions to address systemic issues are the best way to solve inequalities faced by our residents. The ENOUGH Act does much in making solutions as local as possible. We support these partnerships to solve major issues alongside local government, local schools, labor unions, nonprofits, small businesses, faith-based, and other community organizations. The ENOUGH Act aligns well with its goals of cradle to career education with the roles our members already provide in the community. Ensuring all children have access to high quality education and care will equip individuals, families, and communities for future success.

Establishing the Governor's Office for Children with the intent to ensure healthy and economically secure families through family-sustaining income and access to health care enables us to support families holistically. We know that child poverty does not just affect children. To thrive, families need access to high quality health care, including reproductive, maternal, behavioral, and mental health care, and healthy, nutritious food. At the same time, providing critical income supports and connecting workers to quality jobs and in-demand occupations builds pathways to opportunity, stable families, thriving communities and ultimately a stronger economy across the state.

Community initiatives that meet the needs and tap into opportunities in their neighborhood, including violence intervention programs, increased access to safe affordable housing, improved public spaces including parks and community gathering spaces, and economic development programs designed to bring good jobs to the community and support locally-owned businesses and entrepreneurs to meet neighborhood needs can be funded through grants set forth in this historic legislation. The rebuilding of neighborhood infrastructure with additional support for children and families should go far in eradicating the causes of poverty.

We would like to thank Governor Wes Moore, the leadership of the General Assembly, and you the members of this esteemed body for supporting and adopting the ENOUGH Act into law. With your support, we can begin to build a Maryland where every child has an equal opportunity for success, no longer hampered by the circumstances of their zip code.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
On Behalf of SEIU Local 500