



February 28, 2024

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 694 - Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports HB 694 - Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024). The ENOUGH Act will support targeted initiatives to alleviate challenges faced by low-income children, youth, and families. Many behavioral health challenges can be addressed or prevented through early interventions and supports during childhood. BHSB supports these efforts and appreciates the Administration’s pursuit of a Maryland where no child grows up in poverty.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and social determinants of health have a tremendous impact on the mental health and well-being of children. Witnessing violence or the untreated behavioral health problems of a caregiver can have a lasting effect on a young person. ACEs can lead to poor physical health, behavioral health challenges, risky behaviors, and even premature death.¹ Investments made to alleviate the conditions that lead to ACEs will pay dividends over time.

ENOUGH Act grants can provide income support, education programs, access to health and behavioral health care, affordable housing, employment programs, and support to children with disabilities, child welfare, and justice-involved youth and young adults. These services can interrupt cycles of poverty, prevent ACEs, and ultimately be the difference in a child’s life.

The place-based strategies to address child poverty of the ENOUGH Act will not only reduce poverty but also improve the behavioral health of children, youth, and families. **BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to support HB 694.**

For more information, please contact BHSB Policy Director Dan Rabbitt at 443-401-6142

References:

¹ V Felitti, R Anda, D Nordenberg, V Edwards, M Koss, J Marks, et al. “Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Vol 14, Issue 4 (1998): 245-258. Available at [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(98\)00017-8/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(98)00017-8/fulltext).