

TO: House Appropriations Committee

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

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Support

Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to express our support for **HB 694**, which reestablishes the Governor's Office for Children, creates a Special Secretary for that Office, and introduces the ENOUGH Grant Program to provide support to identified communities experiencing a high proportion of children living in poverty in all parts of Maryland.

The State Board and MSDE strongly support this focused effort to combat childhood poverty in our State. This approach is consistent with ongoing initiatives to ensure that every child in Maryland has access to a world-class education, such as the investment in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, by providing necessary resources to address concentrations of poverty and historically underfunded school communities.

We view this initiative as taking a holistic approach to lifting children and families out of generational poverty and will offer direct support alongside many of the efforts underway to produce major transformation in our school systems. MSDE welcomes the opportunity to collaborate and partner with communities and other agencies through this program to strengthen opportunities for children and families and build stronger communities with education institutions as key anchors.

We look forward to partnering and coordinating with the Governor's Office of Children on the ENOUGH Grant Program and other strategic statewide initiatives.

The State Board and MSDE request a favorable committee report on **HB 694**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.