



TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Pam Queen

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: February 26, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 666 – *Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support with amendment** for House Bill 666.

House Bill 666 creates a Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences. MDAAP is a strong proponent of the importance of identifying adverse childhood experiences and social determinants of health as a means to better address both mental somatic health challenges that a child may face as a result of those experiences. The impact of social determinants of health and adverse childhood experiences has been demonstrably proven to impact not only the health and well-being of a child during childhood but throughout their life.

To that end, MDAAP strongly supports the creation of the workgroup proposed by House Bill 666 but would also suggest three key amendments. First, the bills should be amended to incorporate a broader range of objectives. The impact of the social determinants of health and the need to account for those determinants should be incorporated into screening efforts. Screening for and intervening on social determinants of health such as food, housing, and energy insecurity has the potential to improve child well-being, including their ability to focus and learn at school, and reduce behavior issues.

Second, there should be additional representation on the taskforce, including from MDAAP. Both the National AAP and the Maryland AAP have been critical stakeholders in the work on this issue done to date. The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers also represent primary care providers for children and should be included in the workgroup.

Finally, MDAAP recommends enhancement of the final requirement of the bill regarding recommendations for steps that primary care providers should take. Primary care providers may be able

to provide some brief counseling and other services in their office, but often external mental health resources are needed. We recommend that the workgroup also be tasked with identifying available resources and identifying counties that lack adequate resources. The taskforce should then make recommendations to the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Maryland Department of Health regarding how to improve access to mental health services.

MDAAP welcomes the opportunity to work with the sponsor and other stakeholders to frame a workgroup, its charge and membership to address both adverse childhood experiences and social determinants of health. With its noted amendments, MDAAP recommends a favorable report.

For more information call:

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