



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

February 5, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB0277 – State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma–Informed Approach– Letter of Information

Dear Chair Kaiser and members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of Health (the “Department”) is submitting this letter of Information for HB0277 – State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma–Informed Approach. This bill, if enacted, will establish the Trauma–Informed Schools Initiative within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and require MSDE, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Department of Human Services (DHS), stakeholders and content experts, to develop guidelines on a trauma–informed approach, and to develop and offer training to staff at each local school system. The bill further requires MSDE to distribute the guidelines to each local school system, develop a website, and in consultation with the MDH and the DHS, study the results of a Trauma-Informed Schools Expansion Program to be established within the MSDE. Lastly, HB277 establishes the Trauma–Informed Schools Expansion Program Fund within the MSDE.

Research shows that childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact on child development and put children at risk for unhealthy behaviors and long-term health risks. According to the Center for Youth Wellness, adverse experiences in childhood can lead to long-term health risks including several top public health concerns of adults such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, COPD, diabetes, Alzheimer’s and suicide.¹ Furthermore, according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, one out of every four children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event.² Schools have increasingly recognized the impact of traumatic stress on student learning and behavior. Because of this recognition, several national organizations have published a variety of tools and resources for schools to identify and manage the impacts of traumatic stress within the school setting using trauma informed approaches.

¹ <https://centerforyouthwellness.org/health-impacts/>

² https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//trauma_facts_for_educators.pdf

While not specified as “guidelines” as referred to in the bill, there are many resources available to implement trauma informed practices within the school setting. The resources include a variety of strategies and frameworks endorsed or developed from nationally known experts and organizations. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has published a tool-kit for educators. The kit provides school administrators, teachers, staff, and concerned parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.³ Similarly, the RAND Corporation offers a resource for “Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Trauma in Schools.”⁴ As part of the “Maryland School Safety Act” (Senate Bill 1265 (2018) and codified, in part, in Education Article § 7-1511 Annotated Code of Maryland) each local education agency must identify a Mental Health Services Coordinator.⁵ As part of the activities under this mandate, the MSDE, MDH, and the Center for School Mental Health collaborate to implement a Maryland Behavioral Health Community of Practice that has offered professional development opportunities and resources to the local Mental Health Services Coordinators. As part of a presentation on January 8, 2019, the coordinators received a professional development guide listing available training including, but not limited to, the NCTSN training resources. Also, the National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, sponsors a website containing a compilation of information entitled “Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Packet.”⁶ MSDE also provides web resources for parents and teachers for students who have experienced trauma.⁷

MDH believes it is important for local school system staff to be informed of trauma informed approaches and trained to implement them among Maryland students. MDH is committed to continue working with MSDE to support safe and supportive learning environments for Maryland students including trauma informed approaches in schools using currently available national models and resources. Given the breadth of resources produced by national experts and currently available to schools, the requirement of this bill for guidelines to be developed by MSDE in collaboration with MDH and DHS is not necessary.

If you have additional questions, please contact Director of Governmental Affairs Webster Ye at (410) 260-3190 or webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Robert R. Neall
Secretary

³ <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

⁴ <https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL272.html>

⁵ <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2018RS/bills/sb/sb1265E.pdf>

⁶ <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package>

⁷ <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/TraumaResourcesTeachersParents.pdf>