



State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)

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SCCAN is an advisory body required by Maryland Family Law Article (Section 5-7A) “to make recommendations annually to the Governor and General Assembly on matters relating to the prevention, detection, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including policy and training needs.” Maryland Essentials for Childhood is a statewide alliance of individuals and organizations with a mission to prevent and mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and promote safe, stable, supportive and nurturing relationships and environments for all of Maryland’s children.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 277

State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach

TO: Hon. Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee

FROM: Wendy Lane, MD, MPH, Chair, State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN)

Claudia Remington, Executive Director, State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN)

Joan Stine, Chair, Maryland Essentials for Childhood

DATE: February 5, 2020

The State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN) and Maryland Essentials for Childhood (MD EFC) strongly support HB 256 which expands the use of trauma-informed approaches in Maryland schools. It would require state guidelines, set up a pilot program and funding, and assess the effectiveness of this approach. Through training and changes in practice and policy, trauma-informed schools recognize trauma and integrate supportive policies and procedures into all aspects of education delivery.

Exciting advances in the science of the developing brain, ACEs, and Resilience require systems to rethink, develop and refine policies and practices to respond to trauma. As Trauma-Informed School systems are based on use of these scientific advances, SCCAN and MD EFC support HB 256 for the following reasons:

- **Trauma Informed Schools help ALL children to feel safe and learn.**
- **School-based programs that address childhood trauma improve educational outcomes, including reducing suspension and expulsion rates and increasing graduation rates.**
- Childhood trauma is a growing public health crisis for the state with implications for our economic, educational, juvenile justice, criminal justice, and public health systems.
- It is estimated that nearly half of all children in the United States have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, or ACE; and, Prior to age 16, two-thirds of children in the U.S. are exposed to a traumatic event, such as: natural and technological disasters; community violence,

trafficking, or terrorism; sudden or violent loss of a loved one; substance use life-threatening illness; or, military family-related stressors.

- Child traumatic stress significantly impacts a child's success in school.
- A child with **four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is 46 times more likely** to have **learning or emotional problems**.
- Children who have **suffered three or more traumatic experiences are two-and-half times more likely to repeat a grade** than are children who have experienced none; **five times more likely** to have **severe attendance issues**; **six times more likely** to experience **behavioral problems**; and more than **twice as likely to be suspended** from school.
- Acquiring academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics requires: attention, organization, comprehension, memory engagement in learning, and trust. **Child traumatic stress**, rewires the brain so that the fight or flight and dissociative responses are easily triggered, impacting students' acquisition of skills and academic achievement.
- Childhood traumatic stress impacts behavior—including aggression, disproportionate reactivity, impulsivity, distractibility, or withdrawal and avoidance—and disrupts the learning environment for all children; and, frequently leads to exclusionary school discipline measures and school absence.
- Educators working with traumatized students are particularly vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress, experiencing burnout, fatigue, irritability, and other symptoms. Staff, as well as, students and families are supported by schools that are trauma-informed.
- Supportive, stable relationships between children and their families, and other important adults in their lives are known to buffer children from the effects of childhood traumatic stress.
- Trauma-informed schools positively influencing the architecture of a child's developing brain and are more effective and less costly than attempting to correct poor learning, health, and behaviors later in life.

Through training and changes in practice and policy, trauma-informed schools recognize trauma and integrate supportive policies and procedures into all aspects of education delivery. During 2018 and 2019, trauma-informed schools bills have been passed by state legislatures across the nation, including neighboring jurisdictions the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania.¹

For these reasons we urge a **favorable** committee report on **HB 277: State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach**.

¹ District of Columbia, Iowa, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin