



HB 277 – State Department of Education – Guidelines on Trauma-Informed Approach
House Ways and Means Committee – February 5, 2020
Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Executive Director Baltimore Child Abuse Center
Position: **SUPPORT**

Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Maryland's first and oldest children's advocacy center, supports HB277. This bill would expand the use of trauma-informed approaches used in schools.

Early intervention helps combat ACEs -Adverse Childhood Experiences. Decades of research shows us that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) like witnessing violence or experiencing abuse affects a child's brain development, and ultimately can lead to poor outcomes in school like lack of attention or withdrawal, and, unaddressed, can also ultimately lead to poor health and social outcomes like addiction, disease and even early death. The opposite is also true: addressing childhood trauma early can lead to a better life. Kids are resilient. They just need adults with the right training at the right time.

School communities have an important responsibility to provide trauma-informed responses. Children spend much of their childhood in school the equivalent of an adult's full-time job. When a child has experienced a trauma, having to go to school, or their 'job', the next day and be considered 'normal' is a difficulty. School-based professionals need trauma-informed, professional development training at all levels. Creating school communities that better understand ACEs and trauma will create a sense of empowerment. It approaches kids not with a "What's wrong with you?" but with "What happened to you?" Trauma professionals know that kids might not be ready to talk for months or years and might need the right adults to intervene. Schools can help provide critical first steps to healing.

Handle with Care. Handle with Care launched in Maryland across Maryland. A pilot launched in Baltimore Fall 2019 that is city-wide trauma-informed response to child maltreatment and children's exposure to violence. It adopted to provide child -centered trauma responses in the case of a child returning to school after experiencing a traumatic event. The program convenes law enforcement, schools and providers to confidentially signal that a child has experienced an unnamed traumatic event and should be handled with care, not punished.

HB 277 supports and expands Handle with Care and beyond by providing evidence-based, positive behavioral interventions to discipline, HB 277 will provide teachers with research and training to create more constructive, healthy, and trauma-informed school environments for students.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB277.

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