



Maryland Alliance for  
Racial Equity in Education

Senate Bill 425: Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences  
Position: Favorable with Amendments  
Committee: Finance

February 16, 2021

Chair Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE) is pleased to provide favorable with amendments testimony for Senate Bill 425-Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences. MAREE is a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system.

MAREE is supportive of proactive, culturally relevant efforts to address the mental and behavioral health needs of students, particularly given the acute, disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on Black, Latino, and Indigenous families and communities. These racial/ethnic groups have been devastated by the virus, which represent 75% of child deaths due to COVID and just 41% of that national population. The moment we are in is a long, complex adverse childhood experience for too many.

Even prior to the current pandemic, the very same historically and presently oppressed groups of children experienced ACES at disproportionate rates and had limited access to quality mental and behavioral healthcare.

SB 425 would establish a workgroup to undertake a near-comprehensive look at the scope and impact of adverse childhood experiences on minors in the state and make recommendations to address their needs. MAREE believes this bill could be strengthened with the following modifications:

- The workgroup should include at least one (if not multiple) individuals with expertise in culturally relevant pedagogy and practices, such as liberation-focused healing, restorative practices, and trauma-informed healing
- The workgroup should include several recent graduates of or current students in Maryland public schools who are racially and geographically representative of the state
- The workgroup should include some data indicators to capture the experiences of students who have undocumented or mixed family status, which may require partnership with trusted community validators serving undocumented and mixed status communities

The mental, behavioral, and overall socio-emotional health of Maryland's students is a prerequisite to their academic success. Maryland's Black, Brown, and Indigenous students in particular, and our public-school students at large, will benefit from the work and recommendations of the workgroup proposed by this bill.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education urges an amended favorable report on SB 425**