

Senate Bill 299
Human Services – Trauma–Informed Care – Commission and Training
Finance Committee
February 11, 2021

Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 299, which would create a commission to coordinate a statewide initiative to prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of state services that impact children, youth, families and older adults and require trauma-informed training of state agency staff.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we recognize the devastating and continuing consequences of trauma in an individual's life.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff interact with Marylanders facing challenges and difficulties, those challenges and difficulties that have only escalated during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including the inequitable exposure to the traumas of the pandemic – job loss, housing insecurity, food insecurity, contracting COVID and death of a loved one.

At Catholic Charities, we work with adults, children and families across the state of Maryland, and can attest that most, if not all, with whom we work have been exposed to and experienced trauma throughout the courses of their lives. According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, 70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event. Recent research by the Stress, Health, and Aging Research Program (SHARP) states that, “approximately 70% to 90% of adults aged 65 and up have been exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event during their lifetime. The National Survey of Children's Health found that that nearly half of the Nation's children, 35 million, have experienced one or more types of trauma. As homelessness is considered a traumatic factor, 100% of men, women, children, and families who are experiencing homelessness are considered to have experienced trauma.

Many of the people we work with have been exposed to and experienced severe trauma; this is also true of the general population. By prioritizing the response and delivery of trauma informed care by Maryland state agencies and their respective staffs, programs, and services, the well-being of Marylanders is also prioritized, as trauma informed care works to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization by promoting interactions informed by competence and compassion.

On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 299.

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy