



March 23, 2021

**Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 299- Human Services- Trauma-Informed Care- Commission and Training

Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. **Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 77,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore is pleased to support SB 299- Human Services- Trauma-Informed Care-Commission and Training. This bill would establish the Commission on Trauma-Informed Care 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.

ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, are a category of early life traumas which negatively impact long-term health, prosperity, and social mobility outcomes. ACEs encompass traumatic experiences at all levels of severity and include emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect, domestic and intimate partner violence, illicit substance use in the home, untreated mental illness in the home, the incarceration of a household member, and the separation and/or divorce of adult caregivers.¹

According to the 1998, Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) these experiences are relatively common about 67% of survey participants had at least one ACE.² The more traumatic experiences that a child had the higher the risk for disease and lifelong negative outcomes including mental health and substance use disorders. Recent data collected in Maryland found that more than 40% of Maryland children have at least one ACE-15.4% have 2 or more.³

While ACEs and trauma can have a profound impact on a child’s health and well-being lasting into adulthood it is not a life sentence. The Commission established in SB 299 is a positive first step to mitigating the negative impacts of ACEs and childhood trauma.

A coordinated effort focused on multiple disciplines including various state departments and agencies as outlined in this legislation, is key to stemming the tide. **As such, BHSB urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to pass SB 299.**

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Findex.html

² Id.

³ Baltimore Sun. More than 40 percent of Maryland children experience traumatic events. October 19, 2017.