

BILL: House Bill 694
TITLE: Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)
DATE: February 28, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Appropriations and Health and Government Operations
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 694 in order to develop and fund coordinated efforts to address the needs of communities experiencing concentrated poverty. MABE supports establishing the “Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program” as a bold and innovative approach to improving conditions for families and their children, and many of whom are public school students, in communities most heavily impacted by poverty.

MABE supports the ENOUGH program as a major initiative of Governor Wes Moore aligned with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and more specifically the Blueprint’s investment in the successful development of community schools. According to the Moore Administration, “The ENOUGH Act uses place-based interventions in communities with disproportionately high numbers of children living in poverty – rural, suburban and urban. Communities that show an ability to assess existing pathways to success, coordinate across sectors, and address challenges strategically and in a holistic manner can apply for competitive grant funding of up to \$10 million per year. The program will be run through the Governor’s Office of Children.”

MABE, on behalf of all local boards, strongly supports the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and its vision for a world-class public education system for all students. The Blueprint provides significant funding to support the planning and operation of community schools in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. The Blueprint law defines a community school as a public school that establishes a set of strategic partnerships between the school and other community resources that promote student achievement, positive learning conditions, and the well-being of students, families, and the community by providing wraparound services. Therefore, MABE also supports the community-based improvements facilitated and funded through the ENOUGH program. Local School systems look forward to working with the Governor’s Office for Children and other partners toward achieving the program’s goals to target childhood poverty.

Again, under the Blueprint local school systems are operating many community schools and responsible for coordinating wraparound services for students and their families. The Blueprint law defines wraparound services, as follows:

- “Wraparound services” means:
- (1) Extended learning time, including before and after school, weekends, summer school, and an extended school year;
 - (2) Safe transportation to and from school and off-site apprenticeship programs;
 - (3) Vision and dental care services;

- (4) Establishing or expanding school-based health center services;
- (5) Additional social workers, mentors, counselors, psychologists, and restorative practice coaches;
- (6) Enhancing physical wellness, including providing healthy food for in-school and out-of-school time and linkages to community providers;
- (7) Enhancing behavioral health services, including access to mental health practitioners and providing professional development to school staff to provide trauma-informed interventions;
- (8) Providing family and community engagement and supports, including informing parents of academic course offerings, language classes, workforce development training, opportunities for children, and available social services as well as educating families on how to monitor a child's learning;
- (9) Establishing and enhancing linkages to Judy Centers and other early education programs that feed into the school;
- (10) Enhancing student enrichment experiences, including educational field trips, partnerships, and programs with museums, arts organizations, and cultural institutions;
- (11) Improving student attendance;
- (12) Improving the learning environment at the school; and
- (13) Any professional development for teachers and school staff to quickly identify students who are in need of these resources.

The breadth and scope of community school needs assessments and implementation plan involve connecting families with these wraparound services and much more. And the Blueprint clearly intends for this to be community-based process of engagement, buy-in, and partnership. Again, MABE believes that the ENOUGH program will contribute to the success of coordinated work by organizations and agencies, including local school systems.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 694.