

THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR  
**WES MOORE**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR CHILDREN

## Children's Cabinet Child Poverty and Economic Mobility Three-Year Strategic Plan

ENOUGH Act of 2024 (SB 482)

**Wes Moore**  
Governor

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Special Secretary, Governor's Office for Children

Submitted by the Governor's Office for Children, on behalf of the Children's Cabinet.

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# Table of Contents

Maryland's Children's Cabinet Membership	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction and North Star	4
Overview: Children's Cabinet and Partners	6
The Children's Cabinet	6
The Governor's Office for Children	6
ENOUGH Initiative and Theory of Action	7
All-of-Government Approach	8
Community Datahubs	9
Fiscal Mapping	9
Local Management Boards and Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund	10
Children's Cabinet Child Poverty and Economic Mobility Three-Year Strategic Plan	11
High-Quality Child Care and Education	12
Nurturing Healthy and Economically Secure Families	16
Creating Safe and Thriving Communities	23
Cross-cutting Issues	25
Cross-cutting Strategies	26
Critical Partnerships	26
Conclusion	27

# Maryland's Children's Cabinet Membership

The Children's Cabinet is chaired by the Special Secretary for the Governor's Office for Children and includes the following Secretaries:

*Carmel Martin*  
Special Secretary for the Governor's Office  
for Children (GOC)

*Yaakov "Jake" Weissmann*  
Acting Secretary for the Department of  
Budget and Management (DBM)

*Carol Beatty*  
Secretary for the Department of Disabilities  
(MDOD)

*Meena Seshamani*  
Secretary for the Department of Health  
(MDH)

*Jake Day*  
Secretary for the Department of Housing and  
Community Development (DHCD)

*Rafael López*  
Secretary for the Department of Human  
Services (DHS)

*Katie Savage*  
Secretary for the Department of Information  
Technology (DoIT)

*Betsy Fox Tolentino*  
Acting Secretary for the Department of  
Juvenile Services (DJS)

*Jonny Dorsey*  
Acting Secretary for the Department of  
Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI)

*Portia Wu*  
Secretary for the Department of Labor (MD  
Labor)

*Sanjay Rai*  
Secretary for the Maryland Higher Education  
Commission (MHEC)

*Carey Wright*  
State Superintendent for the Maryland State  
Department of Education (MSDE)

## Ex-officio members

*Rebecca Flora*  
Secretary for the Department of Planning  
(MDP)

*Asma Mirza*  
Chief Performance Officer, Governor's Office  
of Performance Improvement (GOPI)

*Pat McLoughlin*  
Executive Director, Maryland Benefits

*Natalie Evans Harris*  
State Chief Data Officer

*Francesca Ioffreda*  
Chief Innovation Officer

*With appreciation for the Maryland state agencies, offices, and staff who provided their support in creating and authoring this strategic plan, and who are leading the important work articulated in the plan, along with partners across the state.*

# Executive Summary

The mission of the Moore-Miller Administration is “Leave No One Behind,” and central to that mission is a commitment to significantly reducing the number of children living in poverty in the coming decade. Aligned with this mission, in January 2024, Governor Moore signed an [executive order](#) to re-establish the Children’s Cabinet, a governing body charged with coordinating cross-agency strategies to support children and families and reduce the number of children living in poverty. Later that year, the Moore-Miller Administration partnered with the Maryland General Assembly on the passage of the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (ENOUGH) Act, a [law](#) intended to tackle the root causes of poverty in Maryland by addressing inequities and working with impacted communities to develop local solutions.

In addition to establishing the ENOUGH initiative, the law required the Children’s Cabinet to submit to the Maryland General Assembly a three-year plan for children, youth, and families on or before December 1, 2025. In addition to the cabinet members and agencies themselves, several entities and programs contribute to and support the Children’s Cabinet in its work to support children and families and reduce the number of children living in poverty. This includes: the Governor’s Office for Children; the ENOUGH initiative, including ENOUGH communities and other partners; Local Management Boards; and the Children’s Cabinet Interagency Fund, among others.

This strategic plan will serve as a roadmap for the Children’s Cabinet to build a network of supports, programs, and services for children and their families, with a focus on driving progress toward our north star of reducing child poverty and increasing economic mobility so that Maryland is a state where:

- **We are providing high-quality child care and education** to unlock children’s potential from birth until working in a career, including by ensuring smooth transitions across K-12 to college and career;
- **We are nurturing healthy and economically secure families** by increasing community members and families’ access to high-quality health care - with goals of decreasing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, and improving mental health - and by working to create higher rates of employment in living wage jobs and stable, thriving households where families can provide necessities, weather hard times, and build wealth; and
- **We are creating safe and thriving communities** by fostering communities where residents feel safe and can thrive through high-quality, affordable housing, a robust commercial core, and access to recreational spaces, nutritious food, and transportation.

This vision aligns with the ENOUGH initiative’s three key pillars for tackling poverty and creating pathways for children and families to prosper. The strategic plan articulates a set of objectives and goals that will help us meet this vision, and it provides examples of actions and initiatives the Children’s Cabinet agencies are undertaking – in many cases in partnership with each other – under each pillar that have the potential to move the needle on child poverty and economic mobility over the next three years. Under each pillar, the plan also articulates a high-level vision for the work the Children’s Cabinet will collectively prioritize over the next three years.

# Introduction and North Star

For too long, concentrated child poverty has existed in neighborhoods across the state of Maryland, denying many children the ability to determine their own future and reach their full potential. The consequences of child poverty extend far beyond an individual child or their family's economic hardship. For example, individuals who grow up experiencing poverty complete fewer years of schooling, are more likely to have poor health outcomes or experience psychological distress, and earn significantly less compared to people who did not experience poverty as children. The longer a child lives in poverty, the more likely they are to experience poverty as an adult. Ultimately, child poverty harms us all, with the cost of child poverty to society estimated at more than \$1 trillion.<sup>1</sup>

There are currently an estimated 150,000 children living in poverty in Maryland. Without consistent, targeted intervention, the cycle continues for generations, not only holding back the families in high-poverty neighborhoods but also creating a barrier to statewide economic growth. However, when child poverty is reduced, the entire state benefits. As more Marylanders become economically mobile, they serve as active participants in the workforce, which ultimately leads to a healthier economy, a stronger tax base, and less strain on public programs: a win for everyone.

The mission of the Moore-Miller Administration is “Leave No One Behind,” and central to that mission is a commitment to significantly reducing the number of children living in poverty in the coming decade. The administration has demonstrated this commitment by making significant investments in Maryland’s children and families. For example, since taking office, Governor Moore and his administration have taken historic action towards ending child poverty, including by:

- **Tackling concentrated child poverty by launching the ENOUGH initiative**, a first-of-its-kind state-led, place-based strategy to create poverty fighting opportunities driven by communities’ lived experience and expertise, data, and cross-sector partnerships. Currently, 27 communities with the highest rates of children living in poverty are receiving support to create neighborhood action plans designed to support children’s well-being and success, promote healthy and economically secure families, and safe and thriving communities.
- **Expanding access to good jobs and raising incomes** by:
  - Significantly increasing apprenticeships and other pathways to good jobs not requiring a college degree, while expanding scholarships for those seeking a postsecondary degree;
  - Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, benefiting 163,000 Maryland workers and 120,000 children;
  - Pardoning 175,000 convictions related to cannabis possession and signing into law the Expungement Reform Act, which will expand expungement eligibility and alleviate barriers to employment, housing, and education for rehabilitated Marylanders; and

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<sup>1</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>.  
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>.

- Launching the historic Service Year Option at DSCI, the first in the nation public service year program for high school graduates, preparing members for employment.
- **Providing direct support to families** by:
  - Signing the Family Prosperity Act, which is lifting thousands of children into the next rung on the economic ladder through an expansion of the Child Tax Credit and permanent extension of the Earned Income Tax Credit;
  - Making historic investments in child care affordability, with a nearly 81 percent increase in children enrolled in MSDE's Child Care Scholarship Program. Provider participation in the program has also increased by 15 percent;
  - Providing over \$50 million in general funds to support DHS's Temporary Cash Assistance program, which assists more than 75,000 Marylanders;
  - Administering over \$70 million in SUN Bucks funds to feed over 600,000 students in both 2024 and 2025 - the largest investment in Maryland state history toward combatting childhood hunger during the summer months; and
  - Increasing post-pandemic participation in Medicaid to historic levels, expanding access to prenatal and postpartum care and increasing mental and behavioral health services for students through over [\\$100 million](#) in grants for in school and community health.
- **Making historic investments in education** of \$9.2 billion, a 50 percent increase from the last Governor's term, and signing into law the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act and increasing access to preschool for more than 2,000 three- and four- year olds.
- **Making quality housing more affordable** by:
  - Passing the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, legislation that is opening pathways for more homes to be built in Maryland than in any of the previous 10 years; and
  - Launching the Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative in partnership with the City of Baltimore, which will convert 5,000 vacant properties into homes or productive spaces within five years, revitalizing urban neighborhoods and expanding housing options – cutting vacants in half.

These accomplishments, thanks in no small part to the abiding and diligent work of state lawmakers, agencies, and other partners, represent progress towards the Moore-Miller Administration's mission to end child poverty and promote economic mobility.

These efforts must continue and be met with newfound urgency given decisions and policies at the federal level that threaten the well-being and prosperity of Marylanders. This includes the enactment of H.R. 1, which represents the single-largest roll-back of critical safety net and poverty-fighting programs in modern history. These federal actions and decisions will risk posing devastating consequences to Maryland's children and families, including the more than 680,000 Marylanders who rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to put food on their tables, the 1.5 million people whose Medicaid coverage allows them to get the care they need and deserve, the 392,000 students in Maryland who are fed during the school day because of school meals, and the [504 Title One Schools](#) in Maryland providing assistance to students living in poverty. The Moore-Miller Administration will use every tool at its disposal to protect Marylanders and minimize the impact of these harmful federal policies.

# Overview: Children's Cabinet and Partners

## The Children's Cabinet

In January 2024, Governor Moore signed an [executive order](#) to re-establish the Children's Cabinet, a governing body charged with coordinating cross-agency strategies to support children and families and reduce the number of children living in poverty. The Children's Cabinet, chaired by the Special Secretary of the Governor's Office for Children, consists of the following Secretaries:

- Special Secretary for the Governor's Office for Children
- Secretary for the Department of Budget and Management
- Secretary for the Department of Disabilities
- Secretary for the Department of Health
- Secretary for the Department of Housing and Community Development
- Secretary for the Department of Human Services
- Secretary for the Department of Information Technology
- Secretary for the Department of Juvenile Services
- Secretary for the Department of Service and Civic Innovation
- Secretary for the Department of Labor
- Secretary for the Maryland Higher Education Commission
- State Superintendent for the Maryland State Department of Education

These secretaries and their teams provide critical leadership on policy development, strategy, and implementation of statewide efforts to reduce child poverty and increase economic mobility, along with other policies and programs designed to improve the well-being of children and families.

The Children's Cabinet also works closely with Local Management Boards (LMBs), which bring together local child-serving agencies, child providers, youth, families, and communities to make decisions about priorities and how resources are deployed to address local needs. The cabinet also administers the Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund (CCIF), which provides resources at the local level to strengthen community-based services to children, youth, and families in alignment with the Children's Cabinet priorities and other statewide goals.

## The Governor's Office for Children

The Governor's Office for Children began in 1978 as the Office for Children and Youth. It was reorganized as the Office for Children, Youth, and Families in 1990. From January 1997 to July 2003, the Office functioned under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and in June 2005, it was restructured as the Governor's Office for Children. In 2020, the GOC moved into the Office of Crime Control and Prevention, and that office was renamed as the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services.

In January 2024, Governor Moore re-established the GOC and Children's Cabinet by [executive order](#). The GOC takes a whole-community, whole-government approach to align, coordinate, and maximize Maryland's investment in children and families. GOC is designed to be a force multiplier – a connector of agencies, communities, and other partners that helps break down barriers in state and local government and ensure that the over \$7 billion in annual spending on

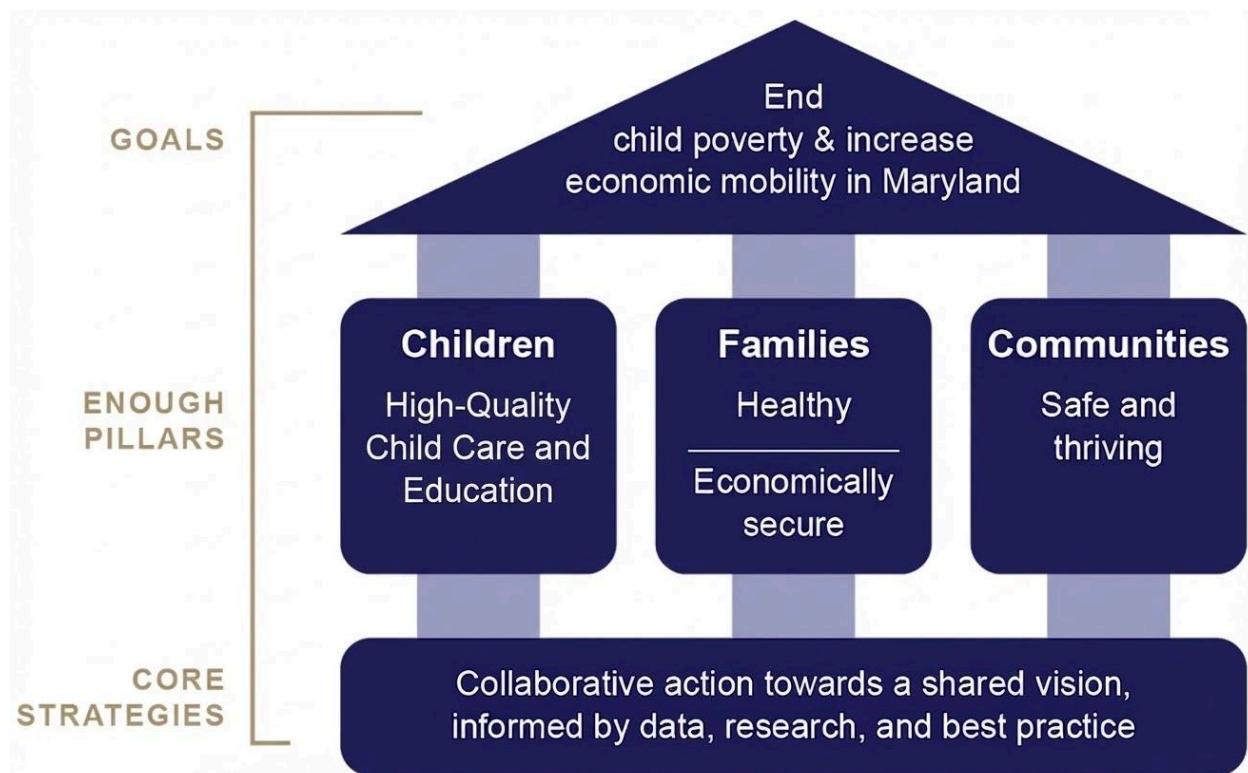
programs that combat child poverty are having an impact in communities that need it most. GOC helps ensure that government is:

- Working better together, not in silos, toward shared goals for impact;
- Easier for the public to access because it is working closely with communities to implement solutions; and
- Fully leveraging its power and resources to support local communities.

## ENOUGH Initiative and Theory of Action

Launched and administered by the GOC, Maryland's ENOUGH initiative aims to reduce the number of children living in poverty through community-led, government-supported solutions. The initiative addresses the root causes of poverty in specific neighborhoods that have been historically left behind and impacted by barriers to economic mobility. Through the use of data, residents' lived experiences, and cross-sector collaboration, this pioneering grant initiative aims to improve access to three key pillars for tackling poverty and creating pathways for children and families to prosper:

- Providing High-Quality Child Care and Education
- Nurturing Healthy and Economically Secure Families
- Creating Safe and Thriving Communities



ENOUGH brings together state agencies, local nonprofits, philanthropies, and community leaders around shared goals and clear outcomes. This initiative recognizes that people who live in a community are best positioned to lead the change in that community. It puts funding and power directly in the hands of neighborhood organizations – not agencies or outsiders. In December 2024, Governor Moore announced grants [to 27 community-led organizations across all 12 statutorily eligible counties](#) to make up the inaugural cohort of ENOUGH grantees. The grantees are categorized under three phases of engagement: partnership development, plan development, and implementation. To date, the administration has invested \$39 million in ENOUGH grants for these communities. This investment takes a first-of-its-kind, community-based strategy to address concentrated child poverty in Maryland.

## All-of-Government Approach

In addition to grantmaking, the GOC and Children's Cabinet supports the ENOUGH initiative by implementing community-driven strategies to support ENOUGH communities. Specifically, the Children's Cabinet is breaking down silos and facilitating the connection between state government and communities through an all-of-government approach - strategically piloting and prioritizing ENOUGH communities in its work with the understanding that targeting investments towards communities with high concentrations of child poverty will have an outsized effect on moving the needle to reduce child poverty. Long-term goals of the all-of-government approach include:

- Facilitating effective resource flow into ENOUGH communities;
- Increasing agencies' proactive support of ENOUGH community needs;
- Building bridges between agencies, local partners, and ENOUGH communities; and
- Developing an ecosystem of support that can sustain itself in the long-term.

The Children's Cabinet provides two types of support to ENOUGH communities and grantees through the all-of-government approach:

- Systemic support: The cabinet is prioritizing high-poverty communities (especially ENOUGH communities) in funding opportunities, unlocking funding opportunities that some ENOUGH communities have not been able to access before.
- Surge / neighborhood-specific support: The cabinet is helping to change relationships between ENOUGH communities and government by working directly with communities to problem-solve and quickly address ENOUGH community needs. Agencies are visiting communities, working side-by-side with them to tackle complex problems including increasing academic support, accessible transportation, health care options, workforce development programs, and healthy food options.

In establishing foundations for communities to effectively leverage government resources, the Children's Cabinet is empowering communities to be at the forefront of changing the cycle of disinvestment and lack of opportunity that has led to generational poverty in neighborhoods across the state.

To date, the Children's Cabinet has helped facilitate more than \$20 million in additional state government funding beyond the ENOUGH grant program to ENOUGH communities. State agencies have been activated in communities that have faced chronic disinvestment to address and solve immediate challenges such as restoring vacant properties, securing mixed income housing development, and increasing child care spots.

These communities have used funding to establish formal partnerships, creating a comprehensive network of more than 550 participating organizations. They have conducted needs assessments informed directly by the feedback of over 12,000 community residents to date, and created action plans to address the root causes of child poverty.

The three implementation communities (Cherry Hill, Hagerstown, and Park Heights) have established Results-Based Accountability plans to measure success through 19 population-level outcome indicators and 81 evidence-based programs designed to end child poverty and are tracking progress based on 244 progress measures. The Results-Based Accountability Framework enables communities to focus planning, decision-making, and budgeting on desired results and indicators. These communities' plans begin with the results, or conditions of well-being, that they aspire to achieve. From there, communities consider indicator data and aim to address the contributing factors behind these indicators. Programs currently operating in implementation communities are focused on ENOUGH's three pillars and include food distribution, home repair assessments, rent assistance, in-home instruction for new parents, and financial literacy workshops.

## **Community Datahubs**

The Children's Cabinet also supports the development of community datahubs. Each ENOUGH grantee community was provided a custom dashboard that included data for the community's associated geographies including census tract, zip code and county level data as available. These dashboards allow communities to access their own data from across state government and public datasets in one place, eliminating barriers to information and data critical to communities' ability to shape their own neighborhood action plans and tackle child poverty in their community.

The ENOUGH Datahubs track a robust, equity-centered set of indicators that reflect our initiative's core pillars: Children, Families, and Communities. The dashboards include outcome measures such as Grade 3 reading and Algebra I proficiency, four-year graduation and chronic absenteeism rates, maternal and infant health outcomes, housing cost burden, food insecurity, workforce participation, and community safety metrics like violent crime and youth justice involvement. In addition to these outcomes, we track critical systems-level indicators—like access to child care scholarships; SNAP, Medicaid, and housing voucher use; and participation in youth apprenticeships—as well as progress measures like employment rates for justice-involved individuals and access to mental health and substance use services.

Collectively, these data points help us evaluate how well state resources are aligning with community needs, drive decision-making across agencies and philanthropic partners, and support accountability to the communities we serve. Tracking these metrics not only illuminates where we are making progress but also highlights where additional investment, innovation, or coordination is needed to disrupt the root causes of concentrated child poverty.

## **Fiscal Mapping**

The Children's Cabinet is not just focused on new services. It's making sure existing investments work better together, are easier to access, and reflect the needs of real families on the ground. The Children's Cabinet partnered with the Children's Funding Project to document federal, state and county level investments in services and programs for children and youth in

Maryland. The final product, known as a fiscal map, analyzes the funding sources and budget allocations that support all programs and services from the prenatal stage to young adulthood statewide. The maps will aid community leaders, advocates, policy makers, the Children's Cabinet, public sector employees, LMBs, ENOUGH communities, nonprofits, residents and community groups to:

- Build stronger partnerships in ENOUGH communities and across the state, drawing down and leveraging additional funding sources to sustain and expand Maryland's efforts to combat child poverty and drive economic mobility;
- Strategically allocate resources to support programs for youth, families, and children;
- Identify funding gaps to ensure that resources are directed where most needed; and
- Guide decision-making on how to distribute resources efficiently.

The [current state fiscal map](#) includes 534 funding streams totaling over \$78 billion (over fiscal year 2019 - fiscal year 2023) invested in supporting Maryland's children and youth. There is also a [county fiscal map](#). At present, both fiscal maps contain data from fiscal years 2019 to 2023. This comprehensive fiscal map will support government actors and communities in breaking down silos and provide community leaders with the information they need to implement solutions and create lasting change. It also supports the Children's Cabinet's mission to end historic disinvestment in communities by making sure resources are transparent to the communities who need them.

## **Local Management Boards and Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund**

Local Management Boards were created in the mid-1990s to promote coordinated, local decision-making focused on results and accountability in child, youth, and family services. There is an LMB in every county and in Baltimore City. Over the past several decades, LMBs have evolved into trusted local conveners and catalysts for innovation in children- and family-serving systems. Their structures vary, with some LMBs located within county government, others functioning as quasi-governmental or nonprofit entities, but their statutory directives and community relationships give them a powerful platform to align programs, secure resources, and strengthen partnerships to support Maryland's children and families. LMBs are funded through the Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund, and these investments must be fully aligned with the Children's Cabinet priorities, including implementation of the ENOUGH initiative. For example, under the fiscal year 2026 Notice of Funding Availability, LMBs are working on aligning resources consistent with the ENOUGH pillars, supporting Community Schools, and improving benefits access. LMBs are also using the Results-Based Accountability Framework for CCIF programs. There are 927 performance measures for CCIF programs, and 114 CCIF programs and strategies funded in fiscal year 2025.

GOC and the Children's Cabinet are also working with LMBs to ensure that CCIF is used to leverage the local infrastructure, expertise, and strong relationships with communities; build the capacity of high poverty communities to design and implement strategies that increase economic mobility and reduce child poverty; and braid public and private resources to be strategically deployed to support high poverty communities. This strategic plan will also inform and drive the activities of the LMBs to ensure a whole-of-government approach to ending child poverty and increasing economic mobility across the state. As such, the Children's Cabinet will design intentional supports and feedback loops to leverage the unique insights and capacity of the LMBs to advance the goals of the Children's Cabinet.

LMBs also support the goals of the Children's Cabinet by maintaining the county-level fiscal maps and housing Local Care Teams (LCTs), which serve as the single point of access for families and children at risk of out-of-home or out-of-state placement, with complex needs and/or who are in crisis.

The work of LMBs, through the CCIF, and the ENOUGH Initiative are complementary and mutually reinforcing, as the LMBs' local service delivery and convening power yield deep relationships and insights to advise upstream policies and systems. ENOUGH targets investment at the neighborhood level to benefit families living in concentrated areas with an extremely high need. LMBs are encouraged to use CCIF resources to support these neighborhood-based efforts within their jurisdictions, but also conduct extensive needs assessments, progress monitoring, and integration of social services and programming across their broader service areas. As such, LMBs are providing a county-level, networked civic infrastructure that supports the implementation and expansion of the ENOUGH Theory of Action in all 24 counties.

LMBs anchor the state's nested civic infrastructure, which connects interests and ideas along the family-local-county-state continuum to advance the ENOUGH initiative and create critical feedback loops and collaborating tables. LMBs serve as trusted local conveners, fiscal stewards, and catalysts for systems change by providing backbone capacity, driving targeted community investments, measuring progress with rigor, and fostering intergovernmental collaboration to reduce child poverty and improve economic mobility.

Together, ENOUGH communities and LMBs create a robust constellation of connected and aligned organizations, community leaders, and municipal entities working in tandem to address child poverty through direct services and collective action for systems change.

## **Children's Cabinet Child Poverty and Economic Mobility Three-Year Strategic Plan**

The ENOUGH Act requires the Children's Cabinet to submit a three-year plan for children, youth, and families to the Maryland General Assembly on or before December 1, 2025. Given the cabinet's charge to coordinate cross-agency strategies to support children and families and reduce the number of children living in poverty, we refer to this plan as the Child Poverty and Economic Mobility Three-Year Strategic Plan. This work has taken new urgency in recent months as actions and policies at the federal level threaten the well-being and prosperity of Marylanders. For instance, as many as 175,000 Marylanders may lose health coverage due to H.R. 1. An estimated 18,000 Marylanders with children aged 14 to 17 are at risk of losing SNAP benefits for their households. Thousands of others have been impacted by other federal funding and job cuts.

Since taking office, the Moore-Miller Administration has employed a data-driven and heart-led approach to deliver results for Marylanders. Over the next three years, the Children's Cabinet will continue to take this approach and work to drive progress toward our north star outlined above, so that even in the face of unprecedented and harmful federal actions Maryland is a state where:

**We are providing high-quality child care and education** to unlock children's potential from birth until working in a career, including by ensuring smooth transitions across K-12 to college and career. Our objectives include:

- Expanding access to high-quality early childhood education;
- Developing high quality and diverse teachers and leaders;
- Promoting college and career readiness; and
- Providing more resources for student success.

**We are nurturing healthy and economically secure families** by increasing community members and families' access to high-quality health care - with goals of decreasing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, and improving mental health - and by working to create higher rates of employment in living wage jobs and stable, thriving households where families can provide necessities, weather hard times, and build wealth. Our objectives, as described in the Moore-Miller State Plan, include:

- Achieving immediate reductions in child poverty through increased economic benefits for families across the state;
- Improving eligibility and access to quality care;
- Helping workers move to in-demand occupations; and
- Supporting Marylanders in accessing quality jobs.

**We are creating safe and thriving communities** by fostering communities where residents feel safe and can thrive through high-quality, affordable housing, a robust commercial core, and access to recreational spaces, nutritious food, and transportation. As noted in the Moore-Miller State Plan, we aim to:

- Create safe and thriving communities by investing deeply in both law enforcement and communities;
- Follow the data to reduce recidivism and deter crime in the first place;
- Tackle the affordable housing shortage;
- Revitalize disinvested communities;
- House the most vulnerable;
- Build wealth through homeownership; and
- Strengthen and incentivize diverse local small businesses and entrepreneurship.

This framework provides the basis of a plan that addresses a spectrum of issues needed to reduce child poverty and increase economic mobility in Maryland. Below are examples of actions and initiatives the Children's Cabinet agencies are undertaking - in many cases in partnership with each other - that have the potential to move the needle on child poverty and economic mobility over the next three years.

## **High-Quality Child Care and Education**

The Children's Cabinet is working to ensure every child – from birth to adulthood – has access to continuous, high-quality child care and education that sets them up for success. This includes early learning, strong K-12 outcomes, and real pathways to college and career. Some of the ways the cabinet is working to realize this vision include:

## *Providing High-Quality Child Care and Education*

Maryland envisions an early childhood system where all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed, families can easily access high-quality resources for their child's success, program providers and early educators (or teachers) are supported, and all children receive high-quality early childhood education, positioning them for success in school and in life. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future guides the Children's Cabinet's efforts to strengthen the early learning continuum from birth through early elementary years and maintain a strong mixed delivery system.

- **Blueprint Pre-K expansion:** Recognizing that a child's early years are the most critical period for brain development and set the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future emphasizes equitable early education opportunities that prepare all children, including students with disabilities, for school and for success. Building on research studies that have proved the academic benefits of Pre-K, the Blueprint expands full-day Pre-K access so that all children have the skills and knowledge to be successful when they enter kindergarten. Specifically, the Blueprint granted all three- and four-year-old children from families earning incomes at or below 300 percent federal poverty level access to high-quality full-day Pre-K at no cost. The Maryland State Department of Education will ensure that families are aware of all Pre-K options available to them and the process for enrolling in the option chosen by the family. High-quality, affordable, and accessible early learning opportunities and child care allows parents to reenter the labor force, providing the opportunity to exit poverty.

## *Community Schools*

Community schools work in collaboration with community partners, local governments, and other stakeholders to provide resources to students and families that need them the most by offering wraparound services that allow students to be successful. Every ENOUGH grantee is required to work closely with a community school to be eligible for the ENOUGH program. Community schools need strong, well-resourced community-based partners to succeed, and the ENOUGH initiative and Children's Cabinet are helping build these partnerships. At the same time, ENOUGH depends on schools being strong anchor institutions in their neighborhoods. Together, they reinforce each other as part of the Moore-Miller Administration's broader strategy to end child poverty. The Children's Cabinet is leading innovative policy efforts regarding community schools, as described below.

- **Community Schools Delivery Program:** To further the goals in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future of making Maryland's community schools the best in the nation, the administration is building new ways for agencies to support students and families in these schools serving the highest poverty students. Through the Community Schools Delivery Program, Children's Cabinet agencies are partnering to align agency services with schools, ensuring that coordinators and staff are trained on addressing key barriers to student achievement such as economic hardship, homelessness, and mental and behavioral health challenges. In the first year, seven agencies, providing eight total offerings, were matched with 23 schools. These offerings were separated into direct service models and coordination models. Two examples of the services rendered include: 1) the Department of Human Services supported families to enroll in key benefits programs (e.g. SNAP and Temporary Cash Assistance) by providing local social service staff on site at schools (direct service); and 2) the Maryland Department of Health supported two Montgomery County Schools to connect with county-level health

efforts to raise awareness around the process necessary to establish a school-based health center (coordination service). Recently, the Moore-Miller Administration announced the launch of the second year of the program. This year, eight state agencies have been matched with local education agencies (LEAs) across 10 counties, where they will provide wraparound services to students and families.

- **Communities in Schools (CIS) Supports:** To support implementation of community schools as outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's future, the administration is providing resources and technical assistance to districts and schools to support high-quality community school implementation from a nationally recognized community schools expert. Through their technical assistance, CIS is building out integrated systems of support and working to address chronic absenteeism.
- **Community Schools Rental Assistance Program (CS RAP):** Administered through the Department of Housing and Community Development, CS RAP is providing critical emergency rental assistance to student households enrolled in community schools who are experiencing housing instability and homelessness. Grant applications for this program opened in April 2025, and DHCD awarded a total of \$10 million in funding to grantees serving 8 counties. Applications for assistance for eligible student households began to open in October 2025. Financial assistance offered under this program include rental and utility arrears, fines and fees related to rental payments, as well as prospective rental and utility assistance and initial relocation costs linked to housing instability.

#### *Reducing the Teacher Shortage*

Excellent teachers can fuel student academic and non-academic success. Conversely, teacher shortages can have a significant impact on the quality of education students experience by increasing class sizes, reducing teacher planning time, and depriving schools of critical academic expertise.

As of March 2025, there were more than 1,600 total teacher vacancies across the state of Maryland, representing roughly 2.5 percent of the state's teaching positions. Since the 2019-2020 school year, Maryland has seen a 165 percent increase in the number of conditionally licensed teachers.

Through Governor Moore's Educator Shortage Act, the Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act, and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland is making historic progress in strengthening and expanding pathways for teachers, and making Maryland the best state in the country to be a teacher. The Children's Cabinet is working to ensure every school - including those serving the highest number of kids in poverty - have access to a high-quality educator, including through:

- **Apprenticeships:** The Children's Cabinet is strengthening the pipeline of qualified educators, including early childhood educators, by establishing paid apprenticeship programs that enable educational support staff and community members to pursue teacher preparation opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. This includes a Statewide Registered Teacher Apprenticeship program that would expand access to licensure programs for young people from 16 years old to advance their career. Through apprenticeship programs, Maryland is also aiming to diversify the profession as well, including by encouraging more men to enter the profession.

- **Alternative Pathways:** The administration is strengthening the pipeline of qualified teachers by expanding alternative certification pathways for conditionally licensed teachers and career changers. This also includes “Learn and Earn Pathways” like “Feds to Eds”, where Maryland is facilitating a pathway for former federal workers to enter the teaching profession.
- **Grow Your Own:** Maryland is supporting LEAs to stand up grow your own (GYO) teacher preparation programs that identify, support, and prepare high school students and non-certified educational staff to become full-time teachers in the communities in which they live. Through the Children’s Cabinet work, LEAs throughout Maryland have worked with partners to create innovative GYO programming, including programs for high school students and teaching assistants to become teachers, and designing opportunities to build pipelines in hard-to-fill areas. Future work will also facilitate opportunities for more men to enter GYO programming.

#### *Driving Academic Achievement*

Every student in Maryland deserves a rigorous education that prepares them for college and careers. While achievement in Maryland has started to rebound from the pandemic in some grades and subject areas, overall results are on the decline. The Children’s Cabinet is committed to turning around the achievement of Maryland students through evidence-based practices, increasing the number of high-quality educators, and ensuring students living in poverty get access to learning acceleration opportunities.

- **Tutoring:** The Maryland State Department of Education is committed to strengthening mathematics outcomes and experiences for all students through evidence-based supports and by building sustainable systems that allow educators to deliver high-quality, responsive mathematics instruction. This commitment is anchored in Maryland’s PreK–12 Mathematics Policy, which outlines a coherent instructional progression, a multi-tiered system of supports, and a vision for all students to be college and career ready by the end of 10th grade. As part of this strategic effort, MSDE has partnered with Saga Education and ASSISTments, two nationally recognized programs with strong evidence of impact. These partnerships, established through the Maryland Fund to Scale Proven Programs, are supporting targeted improvements in middle and high school mathematics, particularly in algebra readiness and success. Together, they contribute to ensuring equitable access to high-quality, productive mathematics experiences—especially for students who have been historically underserved or who need additional support to thrive.
- **Teacher Coaching:** When teachers have access to an effective instructional coach, it has lasting impacts on their students. Currently, no Maryland school district has a coach in every school. The Academic Excellence Program will set a statewide standard for excellence in teacher support, deploying highly effective teachers with a singular focus on teacher development and student growth.

**Looking Ahead:** Over the next three years, Children’s Cabinet agencies will continue to implement these and similar programs and will aim to launch new initiatives to help unlock children’s potential from birth until they are working in a career. Areas we are exploring for future policy and program development include: enabling more families to access quality child care through efforts to increase child care supply; helping more students afford post-secondary

education, including homeless and youth in out-of-home care (foster care); and increasing access to and completion of high-quality experiential learning opportunities for postsecondary students.

## **Nurturing Healthy and Economically Secure Families**

The Children's Cabinet aims to ensure that families have access to high-quality physical and behavioral health care - with goals of decreasing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, and improving mental health. The Children's Cabinet also aims to support families by helping more Marylanders secure living-wage jobs, rather than living paycheck-to-paycheck. This includes job training and other workforce pathways. We also aim for Maryland families to be able to easily access benefits and economic assistance when they need it to help families provide necessities and weather hard times. Some of the initiatives and activities that children's cabinet agencies are leading in furtherance of these goals include:

### *Promoting Kin-First Culture*

For all youth, family connections matter – and they are particularly important for youth in out-of-home care (foster care). The safety and well-being of Maryland's children are our highest priorities. We envision a Maryland where all children are safe from abuse and neglect, thriving in permanent homes, and surrounded by loving families. Compared to non-kin out-of-home care, kinship care - where youth live with family by blood or by choice - minimizes trauma; provides stability and fewer placement disruptions; increases permanency; improves children's behavioral and mental health outcomes; reduces the risk that children in care are trafficked, and maintains family and community ties that function as protective factors for children.

- **Family Matters:** In December 2024, the Department of Human Services launched Family Matters, a bold new approach to strengthening family connections, including for youth experiencing out-of-home care. Family Matters is grounded in research that highlights the importance of kin-first care and familial bonds for child development and well-being. Family Matters centers the belief that every child deserves a safe, loving, and stable home with people they know and trust. Since launching Family Matters and updating regulations, DHS has seen an increase in the number of placements with kin and an increase in the number of kinship caregivers who are licensed.

### *Supporting Children's Mental and Behavioral Health*

Maryland youth are experiencing particularly pressing behavioral health challenges right now. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 percent of Maryland middle and high school students report feeling sad or hopeless. More than 100 young people in Maryland are lost each year due to drug and alcohol overdoses, and suicide is the third leading cause of death among individuals aged 10 to 24. The Children's Cabinet is committed to supporting Maryland's young people and ensuring they have the resources needed to promote their mental health and well-being.

- **Behavioral Health Supports in Schools:** The Maryland Department of Health has made it easier for children enrolled in Medicaid to access mental health services. The expansion allows LEAs to offer certain behavioral health services to all students enrolled in Medicaid. Previously, Medicaid payment for these services was limited to Medicaid-enrolled students who have an approved Individualized Education Program or

Individualized Family Service Plan. Maryland Medicaid covers over 650,000 children in Maryland, almost 1 in 2 children in the state. The updated policy now allows all Maryland public K-12 schools to bill Medicaid for children enrolled in the program that receive diagnostic evaluations, individual therapy, family therapy, and group therapy.

- **Roadmap to Strengthen Maryland's Public Behavioral Health System for Children, Youth, and Families:** In July 2025, MDH released the Roadmap to Strengthen Maryland's Public Behavioral Health System for Children, Youth, and Families. Building on work already underway, this roadmap identifies five key goals - ensuring the behavioral health continuum is coordinated and accessible; focused upstream; efficient and sustainable; comprehensive and equitable; and youth and family-centered - to more comprehensively support children, youth, and their families confronting behavioral health challenges so they can persevere and thrive. It also details specific strategies the Department and its partners can implement to make progress toward achieving these goals.
- **Strengthen Local Care Teams for Youth:** A Local Care Team is an inter-agency council designed to support families of children with intensive emotional and behavioral needs. This collaborative group brings together representatives of several child-serving agencies to review a child's particular needs and, with input from the family, identifies potential programs and services to support the youth and family. LCTs continue to be an important point of access to services for children and youth. As of January 1, 2018, the LMBs are the administrative home for the LCTs and the LCT Coordinator. Parents, family members, or agencies may make referrals directly to the LCT to seek assistance with: accessing services, developing plans of care for community-based services, and coordinating services from multiple agencies. Families and children at risk of out-of-home or out-of-state placement, with complex needs and/or who are in crisis are identified as priorities for the LCT. In the summer of 2024, the State Coordinating Council (SCC) launched an outreach strategy to assess the successes and challenges of LCTs across the state. As part of these activities, the SCC: 1) convened LMB directors and LCT coordinators; 2) held deep-dive discussions with select LCTs, one from each region of the state; 3) held two focus groups with families through the Maryland Coalition of Families; 4) met with the Maryland Hospital Association; and 5) conducted a statewide survey with LCT team members. Based on this outreach, the SCC identified areas for improvement for LCTs across the state to better serve youth and families. These improvements include: process and data collection adjustments to streamline activities, increased awareness of state and local resources, and guidance around how to best reach and serve youth and families with complex needs.

#### *Promoting Maternal and Infant Health*

The Children's Cabinet aims to promote infant and maternal health and provide parenting support through coordinated programs, such as home visiting services.

- **Home Visiting Services:** Home visiting services provide support and teach parenting skills to parents before and after birth. These services are often provided in the home by a nurse or other specially trained professional and help parents get the care and support they need for a healthy pregnancy and healthy child. The benefits of home visiting are numerous. Home visiting programs have been shown to lead to positive birth outcomes such as decreases in low-birth weight babies and pre-term births, as well as increased

school readiness. Parents participating in home visiting programs have also been found to have higher incomes and be more likely to work or be enrolled in education programs.

### *Benefits Access*

A core objective of the Moore-Miller Administration is to achieve reductions in child poverty through economic benefits assistance to families across the state. This is aligned with several administration priorities and activities, including the “family supports” priority outlined in the 2025-2027 Maryland State Disabilities Plan. Specifically, the Disabilities Plan describes the importance of ensuring that individuals and families with disabilities have equal access to public benefit programs. In addition, to expand outreach efforts and strengthen community partnerships, the Department of Human Services created an Office of Benefits Access, to spearhead outreach efforts and ensure Marylanders can easily access available resources and benefits.

By quickly and efficiently delivering benefits and economic assistance to eligible Marylanders when they need them, we can help families move out of and stay out of poverty. The Children’s Cabinet is working to expand benefits access, including in the following ways:

- **Increasing Marylanders’ Awareness and Uptake of the EITC and CTC:** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) are two of the most effective tools that the government has to increase economic mobility for low-income Marylanders. Maryland is one of 17 states, in addition to Washington D.C., with a state-level CTC, and one of 31 with a state-level EITC. Maryland has one of the most expansive state EITCs thanks to the passage of the Family Prosperity Act, championed by Governor Moore in 2023. Many people who are eligible for the tax credits fail to claim them, and unclaimed credits represent missed opportunities and resources for families that could mean the difference between getting by and getting ahead. For the 2025 Tax Season, the Governor’s Office for Children and the Office of the Comptroller of Maryland partnered with the following agencies to launch the Earned It campaign: Department of Human Services, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, and Department of Service and Civic Innovation. The multimedia campaign was designed to educate eligible Marylanders about the state EITC and CTC by leveraging multiple communications channels, including social media, to increase awareness and uptake of these credits and utilize simple, consistent messaging. Maryland saw an increase in the number of taxpayers filing for both the Maryland EITC and CTC during the most recent tax filing season. Tax data shows more than 444,000 claims for the state EITC for tax year 2024 - a 7.8 percent growth compared to tax year 2023; and nearly 54,000 people claimed the state CTC, 5 percent growth compared to tax year 2023. Notably, the number and share of EITC-eligible tax filers who missed the state credit decreased, from 99,000 (or 18 percent) in tax year 2023 to 72,000 (or 14 percent) in tax year 2024. In a first for Maryland, the Department of Human Services launched two free tax preparation sites at their offices to enable Marylanders to file taxes while already visiting a state office for another purpose. These sites were also staffed by Service Year members participating in the Department of Service and Civic Innovation’s Service Year Option.
- **Launching Maryland Benefits One Application:** The Maryland Benefits One Application is a new mobile-friendly tool that will help eligible Marylanders apply for vital benefits. The application will make it easier to apply for Medicaid, SNAP, Temporary Cash Assistance, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programming, and energy

assistance in a single application from a computer or smartphone. The new streamlined application is available through Maryland Benefits, the State of Maryland's online benefits access platform. Formerly known as MD THINK, Maryland Benefits reflects the Moore-Miller Administration's concerted and collaborative effort between the Maryland Departments of Information Technology, Health, and Human Services to stabilize benefits access through technical fixes, increased oversight, expenditure accountability, more transparent budget reporting, and improved inter-agency collaboration. As the state's largest IT asset, Maryland Benefits is now more efficient, accessible, and secure to better serve the needs of 1.3 million Marylanders. The improvements also make access more convenient, relieving the need to drive between state offices or wait in long lines to complete lengthy separate applications. On average, the One Application takes 28 minutes to complete, compared to approximately 80 minutes for SNAP and cash assistance alone.

- **Administering SUN Bucks:** Maryland SUN Bucks helps families with school-aged children who receive free or reduced-price meals buy groceries during the summer break when school meals are unavailable. Families who qualify for the Maryland SUN Bucks program receive \$40 for June, July, and August (a total of \$120) for each eligible student. The program used a more efficient enrollment approach that reduced the administrative burden on families, automatically enrolling 99 percent of children who received Maryland SUN Bucks. During summers 2024 and 2025, SUN Bucks helped feed more than 600,000 children each year across all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. This was compared to about 90,000 children in 2023. The State of Maryland issued over \$72 million in federally-funded grocery buying benefits each summer in 2024 and 2025, making SUN Bucks the largest investment to combat childhood hunger during the summer months in Maryland's history. Maryland SUN Bucks built upon Maryland's existing summer SNAP program and expanded the reach six-fold. Certain areas of the state saw greater increases, such as the Eastern Shore, which saw a ten-fold increase in the number of children served, while Western Maryland saw a remarkable 71-fold increase.
- **Prioritizing Access to Child Care Scholarships:** The Child Care Scholarship (CCS; formerly known as Child Care Subsidy) program helps low- and moderate-income families afford early care and education for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children needing before- or after-care. It supports children's early learning and development while enabling parents to work, attend school, or pursue training. In part due to the Moore-Miller Administration's historic investments in the CCS, since January 2023 and as of January 2025, nearly 20,000 additional children had enrolled in the program, an 81 percent jump in program participation. Provider participation also expanded from 2,859 to 3,300 facilities, marking a 14 percent increase between fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2025; and Maryland is serving about 15 percent of all eligible children, which is above the national average of 12 percent to 13 percent.
- **Implementing 12 Months of Continuous Eligibility for Children Enrolled in Medicaid and MCHP:** Effective January 1, 2024, Maryland provides 12 months of continuous eligibility for children under the age of 19 in Medicaid and the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). Continuous eligibility is critical for Maryland children's health and well-being as children who are disenrolled from health coverage for even part of the year are likely to have poorer health outcomes than children who are continuously enrolled in health coverage. Now, once children are determined eligible for Medicaid or MCHP, they retain coverage for a full year, even if household income or

circumstances change during that period. This effort will reduce children's "churn" rates – periods when children temporarily lose health care coverage due to changes in family circumstances (such as income) and administrative or procedural barriers during renewal or eligibility checks.

- **Expanding Medicaid Coverage for Young People Returning from Incarceration:** Beginning January 1, 2025, Maryland now provides critical health services for children and youth 30 days prior to being released from the juvenile justice system. These critical services include:

- Screening and diagnostic services 30 days prior to release;
- Targeted case management 30 days prior to release;
- Suspending, rather than terminating, Medicaid coverage during incarceration; and
- Redetermining eligibility without requiring a new application and restoring coverage upon release when eligible.

Justice-involved youth have significant health care needs, including those related to mental and behavioral health. This effort supports the long-term health and stability of these young people, helps address persistent health inequities faced by justice involved youth, and has been shown to reduce recidivism by ensuring access to critical care during a pivotal transition period.

#### *Workforce Development*

Maryland is committed to building a more inclusive economy— one where every resident can access high-quality training pathways that lead to good jobs. This means equipping learners with clear information and meaningful options so they can choose the postsecondary pathway that best aligns with their goals, whether an apprenticeship, certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree. It also requires expanding opportunities, removing barriers, and supporting workers as they build new skills critical to the state's long-term economic competitiveness, civic well-being, and social equity.

- **EARN Maryland:** The Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Maryland program funds Strategic Industry Partnerships designed to advance the skills of the state's workforce, grow the state's economy, and increase sustainable employment for working families. The program is industry-led, meaning that employers, along with nonprofits, higher education, local workforce investment boards, Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors, and local governments, play a key part in identifying the specific needs of their industry and in designing training programs that prepare workers to address those needs and fill workforce shortages in a given industry. The program supports both workforce training and wraparound services for individuals facing specific barriers to employment. The Moore-Miller Administration has significantly invested in EARN. In July 2025, Governor Moore announced an additional \$4 million in EARN Maryland awards and an additional \$6.5 million in new EARN Maryland grants. Under the Moore-Miller Administration, the EARN program has placed more than 3,000 Marylanders into employment and provided upskilling opportunities for nearly 5,000 incumbent workers. EARN Maryland generates an estimated \$18.16 of economic impact for every \$1 invested.

- **Road to Careers:** The Road to Careers program is designed to prepare Marylanders who want to pursue a career in the skilled trades but may need extra support to get started on the path to success. The initiative is meant to support individuals who, though facing barriers to employment and significant challenges, aspire to pursue higher wages and family sustaining occupations. Backed by a six-year, \$24 million investment, the program is a partnership between the Maryland Department of Labor and the Maryland Department of Transportation. The program's goal is to build a strong pipeline of skilled workers in transportation, construction, such as equipment operators and welders, fields that are essential to the state's long-term construction pipeline. Remaining in line with the Moore-Miller Administration's efforts to reduce barriers to removing barriers and supporting workers as they build new skills, Road to Careers includes a focus on providing wrap-around supports, such as child care and transportation assistance, to help participants succeed in their training programs. In June, Governor Moore announced the first round of Road to Careers grant recipients.
- **Registered Apprenticeships:** In April 2025, Governor Wes Moore signed into law the Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act of 2025—a strategic investment to deliver family-sustaining careers to more Marylanders, to provide businesses with the talent they need and to grow the state's economy. The RAISE Act creates tools to expand registered apprenticeship to new industries, employers, and communities while maintaining high standards of quality and transparency. Among other things, the RAISE Act establishes the Maryland Pay Per Apprentice Program to help employers offset the cost of hiring and training new Registered Apprentices, which will help make apprenticeship a more accessible workforce strategy for small businesses; invests in intermediaries to serve as connectors between employers, training providers, and sponsors—making it easier to launch and scale apprenticeship programs; and establishes the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development to develop, support, and track Registered Apprenticeship programs across the state.
- **Service Year Option:** In 2023, Governor Moore launched the historic Service Year Option - the first-in-the nation public service year program for high school graduates. This program offers a year of professional growth and career exploration where youth can earn a living wage, gain new skills, and identify where their talents and purpose intersect, all while serving their community with their fellow Marylanders. Members earn at least \$15 an hour and work at least 30 hours a week, while gaining both hard and soft skills through a service placement aligned with their area of interest, in addition to working with support coaches to develop and refine their post-service plans—whether they include college, career, or continued service. Following completion of their service year, participants will earn a completion award of \$6,000 that may be accessed as a direct payment. Service Year Option members will be paired with an apprenticeship program, nonprofit, business or government agency that supports their professional development.

#### *Innovative Public-Private Partnerships to Promote High-Quality Career Pathways*

Maryland is dedicated to initiating impactful, evidence-based partnerships with philanthropies, community organizations, and private businesses to help turbocharge state programs and efforts, including programs to boost opportunities for high-quality career pathways. Some of these high-impact workforce partnerships include:

- **Jobs for the Future Partnership:** Jobs for the Future (JFF) transforms U.S. education and workforce systems to drive economic success for people, businesses, and communities. Apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning are proven models for supporting economic advancement for workers, but many employers struggle to implement high-quality programs. And despite significant growth in recent years, equity gaps persist. Through philanthropic investment, JFF is partnering with the Moore-Miller Administration to expand and strengthen apprenticeship opportunities across the state, including directly in ENOUGH communities. This initiative will directly address structural economic disparities by expanding access to registered apprenticeship careers for more workers, many of whom have not traditionally received the opportunity to “earn while they learn.” Apprenticeships provide paid, work-based training that significantly reduces the need for upfront educational costs. Additionally, within the apprenticeship model, workers are paid on a progressive wage scale, meaning, as a worker’s skills increase within an apprenticeship program, their wages increase too. By expanding the number of apprenticeship slots available, this project will support access to good paying career opportunities in high-growth, in-demand industries like health care, life sciences and cyber.
- **Social Finance:** Maryland is partnering with Social Finance to design and implement a Maryland Pay It Forward Fund, a strategic initiative that aims to assist at least 1,000 Marylanders gain access to high-wage health care careers by eliminating financial and systemic barriers for underserved communities. This initiative would grow and strengthen the state’s nursing and health care workforce by providing education and training, as well as a living stipend, at no upfront cost to learners. The Social Finance Pay It Forward Programs provide zero-interest loans for participants to enroll in high-quality job training, especially those who may not have the savings to pay for training or the credit history for a loan. Participants receive living stipends and supportive services including access to one-time financial assistance and mental health counseling to help them succeed. After completing training, if participants earn above a minimum salary, they pay back their loans through monthly repayments of 10 percent of their discretionary income for up to five years. Any graduates not earning the minimum salary after completing their training can apply for income-based deferment on their loan, during which their monthly payment obligation is \$0.
- **CodePATH:** The Moore-Miller Administration is partnering with Cyber Maryland and CodePath to open doors to high-paying, high-growth careers in fields like software engineering, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. The administration has a goal of reaching 2,000 students annually and at least 60 percent from historically marginalized backgrounds. These roles offer life-changing income potential, with CodePath Black and Latino alumni being four times more likely to land competitive tech jobs. On average, CodePath graduates are 97 percent more likely to secure a first technical internship or job that significantly boosts their earning power including a starting salary of \$93,000 just one year after graduation, well above the median income in underserved communities, laying the foundation for long-term wealth creation and economic mobility. Beginning in June 2025, CodePath launched key components of its Maryland strategy, including placing students into internships and rolling out new programming to prepare participants for Summer 2026 roles. In Summer 2025, 25 students from Morgan State University and Bowie State University are enrolled in industry-led courses focused on technical interview preparation and cybersecurity.

**Looking Ahead:** The Children's Cabinet will continue to implement initiatives like the ones listed above to support Maryland families and help them thrive. This work is especially important in light of harmful policies and cuts at the federal level that may impact Maryland families' health, well-being, and livelihood. Throughout the next three years, Children's Cabinet agencies will work together to mitigate the harms of H.R. 1 and other recent federal actions to the greatest extent possible. And in spite of these federal actions, the Children's Cabinet will also explore new partnerships and programs to promote Maryland families' health and economic security. These include: expanding Marylanders' access to the family-supporting benefits and resources they need, particularly among new and expectant parents and people with disabilities; connecting Marylanders in high-poverty communities to high-quality career pathways; and strengthening pathways to in-demand sectors like health care.

## **Creating Safe and Thriving Communities**

The Children's Cabinet supports a vision of communities where residents feel safe and where the built environment supports their ability to thrive, including through high-quality, affordable housing, a thriving commercial core, and access to recreational spaces, nutritious food, and transportation. Some of the ways the cabinet is working to realize this vision include:

- **Safer Stronger Together:** Safer Stronger Together (SST) serves multi-system involved youth (e.g., child welfare and justice-involvement) aged 13 to 25 years and families with intensive wrap-around services. A place-based initiative, SST launched in 2024 with three pilot sites - Hagerstown (Washington County), Salisbury (Wicomico County), and Broadway East (Baltimore City). The program aims to improve engagement with individuals and families, provide community-responsive resources at Opportunity Centers, and increase overall community safety. SST utilizes three main strategies to support participants. First, the program co-locates agency staff and resources in centers closer to communities served by incorporating Family Navigators. Second, the program aims to empower community members to co-design ways to improve neighborhood safety and wellness by funding local groups. Lastly, SST aims to improve community safety by targeting key services and supports to people living within high crime streets.
- **Thrive Academy:** The Moore-Miller Administration launched the Thrive Academy to reduce gun violence in the state for all residents, and especially young Black men who are particularly impacted by gun violence. Thrive Academy provides youth aged 13 to 21 years with coaching, skill development, and wraparound support to help reduce the risk of gun violence and build safer futures. Since its launch, Thrive Academy participants have seen remarkable progress. Specifically, the program has helped to reduce victimization, including non-fatal shootings and homicides, as well as reduce gun violence, new arrests, and new gun related offenses. SST has also increased access to critical support networks, serving 182 youth since launching in 2023.
- **Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement:** In 2024, the Department of Housing and Community Development was awarded \$2 million to create a statewide strategy and framework for preventing and ending youth homelessness. This initiative will help partners, including those in the education, child welfare, and juvenile justice sectors make and improve connections and coordination to reduce youth homelessness. Under this program, DHCD provided community partners funding and technical assistance to launch local Youth Action Boards to uplift voices of youth with lived expertise on homelessness, provide them with paid work opportunities, develop youth-specific

interventions for housing and services, and improve the Homeless Management Information System and Coordinated Entry to be youth-centered. Under the Moore-Miller Administration, DHCD has also increased state funding for housing and supportive services for unaccompanied homeless youth by over 60 percent, to \$2.3 million annually. These investments, coupled with local efforts, led to a 6 percent reduction in unaccompanied youth homelessness.

- **Mentoring for Court-Involved Youth:** In September 2025, Governor Moore announced a special partnership between the Department of Juvenile Services, Governor's Office for Children, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Arnold Ventures to better serve justice-involved youth. Through this partnership, LMBs have the option to invest into an opportunity that provides evidence-based mentoring while maximizing funding through a matching model. Big Brothers Big Sisters is a community-based mentoring model with strong evidence showing improved outcomes for youth, including youth who are at-risk of court involvement. Arnold Ventures and DJS will each provide annual matching funds for LMB-identified CCIF investments over four fiscal years. The partnership will initially extend to Washington County, the Eastern Shore, and counties across the National Capital Area and Central Maryland. The opportunity will prioritize youth in areas of high concentrations of poverty or that reside in a low-income family, in addition to youth who have had a light-touch engagement with the juvenile justice system.
- **Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative:** Designed to transform 5,000 vacant properties into homes or productive spaces in Baltimore City within five years, the Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative (BVRI) will revitalize urban neighborhoods and expand housing options, including affordable homeownership. BVRI is tackling some of Maryland's toughest housing challenges with a coordinated approach to increase efficiency and reinvestment. The initiative will work to 1) expedite the reduction of vacant building notices; 2) increase vacant homes converted to occupied housing with an emphasis on homeownership growth; 3) stabilize and grow populations and households; 4) leverage private sector capital; and 5) strengthen neighborhood housing values and resident homeownership wealth. Since its launch, BVRI has resulted in over 900 abated vacant building notices and over 100 demolitions in the city.
- **Just Communities:** Announced on Juneteenth 2025 by Governor Moore, the Just Communities Initiative designates 419 census tracts in Maryland that have been disproportionately impacted by historic disinvestment and discriminatory policies and actions. Seventeen of Maryland's 24 counties and the City of Baltimore have designated Just Communities. In receiving the Just Communities designation, these census tracts will be prioritized for state funding designed to reverse decades of disinvestment and exclusionary policies. The program is anticipated to: 1) actively advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity in Maryland; 2) create opportunities for the improvement of communities that have been historically underserved, with anticipated benefits for the entire state; and 3) right the wrongs of the past, wherein the state systematically excluded certain groups from equal participation in the benefits of public resources.
- **Eviction Protections and Tenant Rights:** In 2024, Governor Moore signed into law the Renters Rights' and Stabilization Act, the most substantial improvement to tenant rights and eviction laws in more than a decade. Since then, DHCD: 1) launched a new Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs to provide tenants and landlords education on their rights and responsibilities under state law; 2) published the first-in-the-nation state Tenants' Bill

of Rights, which must be included in every lease executed by a landlord; and 3) implemented a new tenant right for first opportunity to purchase their rental home when the landlord is selling the property. The new law also increases eviction filing fees, capped security deposits to one month's rent, prevents evictions during freezing temperatures and extreme weather, and extends the time for a warrant of restitution to be issued. These new tenant resources and protections have resulted in a 9 percent drop in eviction filings for failure to pay rent, and an 8 percent drop in evictions. This directly benefits families with children the most, as they make up the majority of households who face eviction each year.

**Looking Ahead:** Over the next three years, Children's Cabinet agencies will aim to launch new programs and initiatives that help communities promote safety, build, and thrive. These include facilitating reentry supports for justice-involved youth; driving resources for small business and community development, particularly in low-and moderate income neighborhoods with unmet demand of essential services; promoting homeownership; and protecting existing homeowners whose homes are at risk of being foreclosed.

### ***Cross-cutting Issues***

- **Young Men and Boys:** The Children's Cabinet is committed to supporting the well-being of all youth in Maryland and following data to drive action and solutions, particularly in areas where youth may be most at risk of falling behind or are in need of support. In Maryland, disturbing data indicates that we must have a greater statewide focus on supporting young men and boys, particularly in the areas related to mental health, educational attainment, and workforce participation. For instance, suicide rates among men under age 30 have risen by more than a third since 2010 and the labor force participation for young men is nearly the lowest it has been in decades. In his 2025 State of the State address, Governor Moore announced that his administration would be taking an all-of-government approach to better understand and address the challenges young men and boys in Maryland face today. The Children's Cabinet is exploring interagency strategies to address the challenges young men and boys are facing today, including strategies that strengthen mental and physical health, promote family and community engagement, and improve readiness to compete in a dynamic economy. To be clear, this charge does not come at the expense of, nor is it meant to exclude, children of other genders. The Children's Cabinet's work in implementing this charge will benefit all youth and families in Maryland.
- **Racial Wealth Gap:** Maryland's racial wealth gap, caused by decades of discriminatory policies and strategic disinvestment in communities, has resulted in systemic inequities, including lower rates of homeownership, business ownership, retirement savings and higher rates of debt for communities of color. We cannot tackle concentrated, intergenerational poverty in this state without addressing the racial wealth gap. That's why we are working across the entire Moore-Miller Administration on initiatives that prioritize work, wages, and wealth in historically disinvested areas. To tackle the racial wealth gap, the Children's Cabinet and entire Moore-Miller Administration are taking a multi-pronged approach. The four prongs to our strategy include:
  - Community wealth, which includes strategies that promote economic opportunity and improve well-being at the community level. This includes initiatives like Just Communities and the ENOUGH Initiative;

- Asset accumulation, which captures strategies that support small businesses gaining access to capital and growing their workforce, in addition to strategies that expand opportunities for household wealth through homeownership;
- Building savings, which highlights strategies that help increase access to banking, improve financial literacy, improve Marylanders' ability to save, and boost their access to jobs and good wages;
- Debt reduction, which will explore strategies that help individuals reduce their debt, including student loans, medical and other forms of debt.

### ***Cross-cutting Strategies***

Across our work, the Children's Cabinet is focused on several core strategies, including:

- **Eliminating barriers to program participation**, including benefits programs, by streamlining application and re-enrollment processes ;
- **Increasing cross-agency coordination at the local and state level** to serve individuals, families and communities more holistically;
- **Lifting community voice and strengthening partnerships** with service providers, community organizations, nonprofits, and the private sector to leverage public-private partnerships and support community driven action; and
- **Driving action based on data and research** to ensure our actions and programs are heart-led and data-driven.

### ***Critical Partnerships***

- **The ENOUGH Alliance:** Formed in early 2025, the [ENOUGH Alliance](#) is a coalition of local and national philanthropy and private sector organizations dedicated to investing in children and families in Maryland to reduce child poverty and boost economic mobility in our state. To amplify the impact of the ENOUGH Act, philanthropic and private sectors have come together with an initial investment of more than \$100 million and a goal to invest \$200 million over the next six years to complement Maryland's public investment, including via the ENOUGH Act, to reduce child poverty. For example, through the ENOUGH Alliance, Blue Meridian Partners has committed significant investments to scale nonprofit organizations in Maryland, provide technical assistance to ENOUGH communities, and support the Moore-Miller Administration's all-of-government approach to tackling child poverty. Organizations including the Bainum Family Foundation and the Sherman Family Foundation are supporting the launch of the ENOUGH Community Support Fund.
- **Governor's Innovation Team:** In June 2024, Governor Moore and Bloomberg Philanthropies announced that the state of Maryland would host the first-ever Bloomberg Philanthropies-supported state-level Innovation Team. Innovation teams are an effective model for public sector leaders seeking collaboration across agencies and sectors focused on finding more effective ways to address complex challenges. To date, the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Team program has driven success in 83 cities across nine countries and four continents, representing the lives of more than 65 million residents. In Maryland, the Innovation Team is charged with identifying, testing, and

piloting new initiatives, particularly initiatives that will advance the Moore-Miller Administration’s fight to reduce child poverty and increase economic mobility.

- **Maryland Department of Planning:** The Maryland Department of Planning’s State Data and Analysis Center plays a core role in supporting multiple Children’s Cabinet projects and workflows. For example, MDP combines census tract child poverty rates, school poverty rates, and school catchment zones to build and host the [ENOUGH eligibility map](#), visualizing ENOUGH eligible census tracts as mandated by law. MDP also queries and presents Maryland data from the United States census for the ENOUGH Datahubs and other Children’s Cabinet and GOC analysis. This includes the measurement of child poverty, which MDP in partnership with the GOC and the Governor’s Innovation Team, reviews best practices for accurately reporting poverty at all levels for Maryland’s geographies.

## Conclusion

The Child Poverty and Economic Mobility Strategic Plan will serve as a roadmap for the Children’s Cabinet to build a network of supports, programs, and services for children and their families, with a focus on reducing child poverty and advancing economic mobility over the next three years. To advance the work articulated in this plan, the Children’s Cabinet will continue to collaborate with core partners, including state and local governments, ENOUGH communities, and LMBs.