

2025 Family League Legislative Priorities

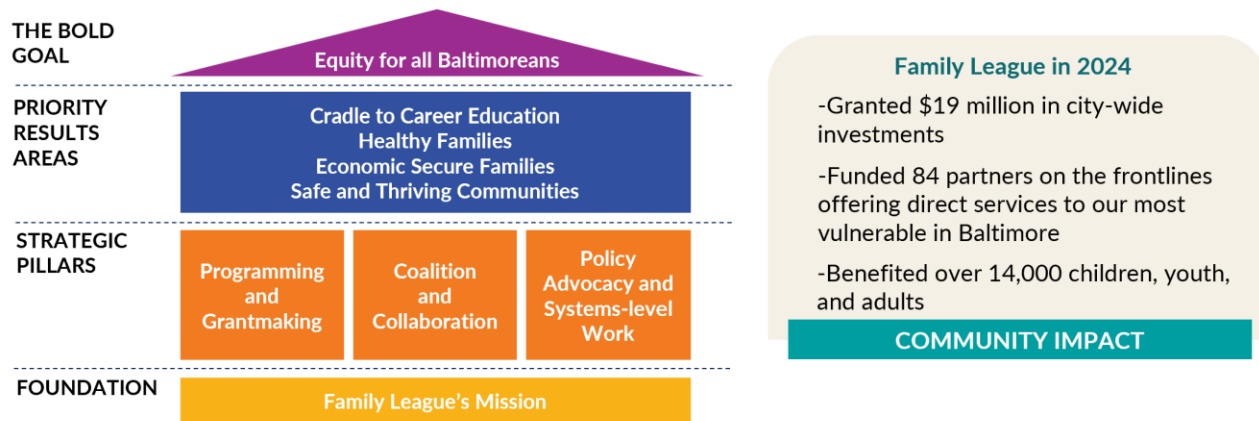
Cradle to Career Education, Healthy Families, Economic Secure Families, Safe and Thriving Communities

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

As the 447th General Assembly legislative session has commenced Family League is releasing our 2025 Legislative Priorities which outline our vision for creating lasting positive change for Baltimore's children, families, and communities. Our approach is built on a comprehensive framework that requires strong local capacity and an interconnected system of supports to foster impactful outcomes.

FAMILY LEAGUE – MARYLAND’S LARGEST LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Our framework for success advances upward mobility for families



Our legislative priorities reflect this integrated approach across four critical areas:

Cradle to Career Education—With 56% of our operational budget dedicated to education efforts, addressing the critical challenges in early childhood education, is a priority. Many Baltimore families face difficult choices - often spending up to 41% of their income on childcare. It is critical to expand support for the [Child Care Quality Incentive Grant Program](#) and strengthened the [Childcare Capital Support Revolving Loan Fund](#) to ensure sustainable, quality early education for all families.

Healthy Families—Our \$4.5 million investment in perinatal health initiatives has demonstrated positive results through home visiting programs. However, health disparities, where Black mothers face 1.4 times higher rates of preterm births, and closing that gap remains a top priority. The expansion of a high quality maternal and child health home visiting infrastructure and strengthened maternal healthcare access would build on the success of the [Healthy Babies Equity Act](#).



Economic Secure Families—Through strategic partnerships, including Governor Moore's groundbreaking \$13.1 million [ENOUGH Initiative](#), creating pathways out of poverty for the 19.6% of Baltimore residents living below the poverty line. Our eleven ENOUGH community partners are pioneering transformative approaches forthcoming across implementation, planning, and partnership tracks to create sustainable economic mobility.

Safe and Thriving Communities—As Baltimore has made historic progress in reducing violent crime, with homicides reaching their second-lowest level in four decades, our efforts toward sustainable community safety require comprehensive support. For example, our \$1.8 million investment in [community safety initiatives](#) supports violence prevention, safe passage programs, and trauma response teams while addressing critical housing affordability challenges.

These priorities represent more than policy proposals—they align with Mayor Scott's Pillars committed to building a stronger, more equitable Baltimore. Through strategic partnerships, innovative investments, and evidence-based approaches, we stand to collaboratively demonstrate what is possible. Now, we seek your support for sustaining and scaling these successful programs and creating lasting change for our communities.

Together, we can continue to build a future where every Baltimore family has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude and determination,

Demaune A. Millard
President & CEO
Family League of Baltimore

Cradle to Career Education: Maryland's Critical Crossroads in Early Education

When a single parent in Baltimore looks at their monthly budget, they face a stark choice that no parent should have to make: should they spend 41% of their income on quality childcare, or should they step back from their career? This is not just a personal dilemma – it is a snapshot of a systemic crisis that threatens Maryland's economic future.

The Hidden Economics of Early Education

The mathematics of early childhood education in Maryland tells a troubling story. In Baltimore, where 58% of families are led by single parents, the cost of center-based infant care consumes half of a family's income. Meanwhile, the very infrastructure of childcare is eroding beneath our feet: Maryland is projected to lose 41% of its [family childcare providers by 2026](#).

As Maryland State Comptroller Brooke Lierman aptly notes, "Childcare is not just a parenting issue—it is [an economic issue](#)." The ripple effects extend far beyond individual families, touching every corner of our economy and our future workforce.

Family League's Community Impact

Family League facilitates leading initiatives addressing this crisis in Baltimore, with more than \$12 million dedicated to education efforts that span the cradle to career continuum. Our approach is not just about funding; it is about creating sustainable changes:

Demonstrated Success

- Baltimore's network of more than 150 Community Schools provides vital resources for students and families. For example, Family League-funded Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs are operating at 69 Community Schools. These programs supported over 3,400 K-12 students
- 162 youth have been successfully diverted from juvenile justice involvement through our Thriving Youth initiatives
- Summer programs have achieved an impressive 86% daily attendance rate among 1,676 Opportunity Youth
- Over 400 community professionals have received specialized training to enhance their impact with families

Critical Challenges Requiring Legislative Action

1. Workforce Crisis in Early Education
 - Current childcare worker salaries range from \$17,402 to \$41,936 annually
 - This compensation structure is driving an exodus of qualified professionals
 - Baltimore City is significantly behind on meeting the mandated 50/50 public-private Pre-K split, currently at 6.4% versus the required 10%
2. Access and Affordability
 - The cost burden on families is creating a two-tiered system of access
 - Current funding mechanisms are insufficient to bridge the affordability gap
 - Provider sustainability is at risk due to unfavorable business economics

CURRENT STATE OF FAMILY AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE SERVICES

Child Care Costs as Compared to Other Major Household Expenses

The estimated current median family income in Baltimore City is \$64,814⁶. A family of four that included a couple and two children ages 0-23 months and 2-4 years can be expected to have the following yearly household expenses:

Expense	Cost	% of Income
Child Care	\$22,126	34.10%
Infant ¹	\$10,363	
Preschooler ²	\$11,763	
Food ³	\$12,612	19.50%
Housing ⁴	\$17,820	27.50%
Taxes ⁵	\$6,333	9.80%
Total	\$58,891	90.90%

¹ Average cost of full-time care in a family child care home (LOCATE, 2022).
² Average cost of full-time care in a child care center (LOCATE, 2022). ³ National average cost of food at home based on a moderate cost plan (Cost of Food at Home Estimated for Food Plans at Four Cost Level, July 2022), U.S. Average, United States Department of Agriculture). ⁴ Based on U.S. Bureau of the Census 2020 median selected owner costs with a mortgage; included mortgage, taxes, insurance and utilities. ⁵ State and local taxes per Comptroller of Maryland (2022), Medicare and FICA taxes per moneychimp.com (2022). Taxes do not reflect Earned Income Credit. ⁶ Current income as shown in the Geolytics Report dated July 2022. This data cannot be compared to previous data.

Reference: [Trends in Child Care 2024](#) (Maryland Family Network), [Child Care Demographics 2023](#) (Maryland Family Network)

Average Weekly Cost of Full-time Child Care

Baltimore City	Family Child Care Programs	Child Care Centers
0-23 months	\$199.29	\$294.36
2-4 years	\$167.28	\$226.22
5 years ¹	\$151.59	\$208.41
School Age Full ²	\$142.29	\$192.82
School Age B/A ³	\$99.95	\$120.33

Source: MFN/LOCATE: Child Care, 6/22.
¹ Average cost of full time care for a 5 year old. Defined as child being in full time child care or being in kindergarten and out-of-school child care, i.e., holidays, school closures and summers. ² Average cost of full time care for a 6+ school age child (out-of-school child care, i.e., holidays, school closures and summers). ³ Average cost of before and after school child care.

CURRENT STATE OF BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC-PRIVATE PRE-K

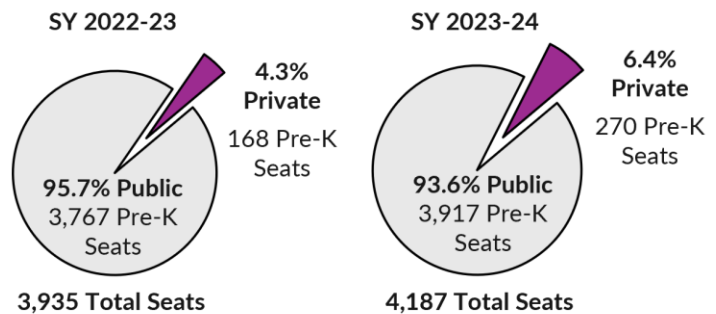
Baltimore City Public-Private Pre-K is below the 10% target for Private delivery



The Baltimore City Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is a partnership of diverse early childhood educators, service providers, funders, public organizations, community advocates, researchers, and families.

ECAC is a membership group. Council membership conduct work along four work groups—(1) Strong Backbone, (2) Smart Thinking, (3) Open Heart, and (4) All Hands In.

Baltimore **Private Pre-K delivery is 6.4%**, consisting of 270 seats.



Reference: [Statewide Pre-K Data Breakdowns Across County and City, MD State Board of Education \(9/24/24\)](#)

Legislative Priority Areas

Immediate Action Items

1. Expand the Child Care Quality Incentive Grant Program
 - Increase funding allocation through the Maryland State Department of Education
 - Streamline application processes for providers
 - Create targeted support for high-need areas
2. Strengthen the Child Care Capital Support Revolving Loan Fund
 - Increase fund capitalization
 - Expanding eligibility criteria
 - Implement favorable terms for providers in childcare deserts

Long-term Strategic Initiatives

1. Workforce Development and Retention
 - Create favorable tax incentives for childcare businesses
 - Establish a wage supplement program for early childhood educators
 - Develop career advancement pathways
2. Family Support Mechanisms
 - Drive further communication of sliding-scale subsidy programs to families
 - Explore further tax credits for families facing high childcare costs
 - Optimize processes involving employer incentives for providing childcare benefits

The Path Forward

The implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future presents a historic opportunity to transform our early childhood education system. Family League's proven track record of success, combined with our deep community partnerships, positions us as a crucial partner in this transformation.

The choice before the Maryland legislature is clear: we can either address this crisis head-on with bold, comprehensive action (while taking full account of State's fiscal environment), or we can watch as our early childhood education infrastructure continues to erode, taking with it the dreams and potential of countless Maryland families.

The time for incremental changes has passed. We need decisive action that matches the scale of the challenge before us. The future of Maryland's children – and our state's economic vitality – depends on it.

Healthy Families: Breaking the Cycle Through Family-Centered Care

In Baltimore City, the story of maternal and infant health is written in stark statistics and lived experiences. When a baby is born to a Black mother in our city, they face a 13.3% chance of being born preterm – 1.4 times higher than their peers. Behind this number lies a complex web of healthcare access, social determinants, and systemic barriers that Family League is working to untangle.

The State of Family Health: A Tale of Two Cities

Baltimore's health landscape presents a study in contrast. While we've seen improvement in preterm birth rates to 12.1% in 2023, this achievement is overshadowed by our "F" grade from the [March of Dimes](#) – a stark reminder of the work that remains. Our city's [Maternal Vulnerability Index](#) of 65.1 ranks as the fourth highest in Maryland, painting a picture of families facing significant barriers to optimal health outcomes.

Family League's Community Impact

With a strategic investment of \$4.5 million in FY25, Family League is driving transformative change through innovative and evidence-based approaches:

Proven Interventions

- Our Home Visiting programs exceed their 85% target for family service under MIECHV (Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting)
- DRUM Healthy Families and Sinai Hospital have surpassed engagement goals

Breakthrough Initiatives

Our HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) program portfolio exemplifies our commitment to community-driven solutions:

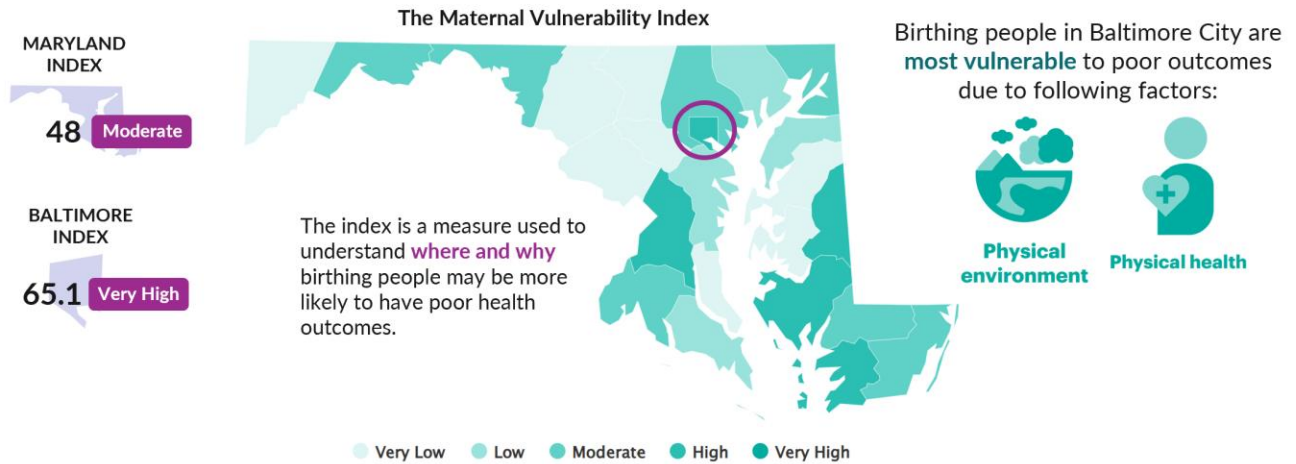
- Pioneering a 12-week workforce development program
- Creating pathways for program participants to become home visitors
- Earning national recognition (HIPPY US and Start Early) for innovative approaches to family support

Critical Challenges Requiring Legislative Action

1. Maternal Health Disparities
 - Preterm birth rates disproportionately affect Black families
 - Chronic health conditions continue to drive adverse outcomes
 - Housing instability undermines health interventions
2. Healthcare Access and Equity
 - Despite expanded Medicaid coverage through the Healthy Babies Equity Act more assistance is essential
 - Need for increased support for evidence-based programs
 - Geographic disparities in healthcare access persist

CURRENT STATE OF INFANT MORTALITY FOR FAMILIES

Baltimore City families are very likely to have newborns with poor health outcomes



Reference: [2024 Maryland March of Dimes Report Card for Maryland](#)

Legislative Priority Areas

Immediate Action Items

1. Expand Home Visiting Infrastructure
 - o Increase funding for evidence-based models
 - o Support workforce development initiatives
 - o Enhance housing support programs
2. Strengthening Maternal Healthcare Access
 - o Build on the success of the Healthy Babies Equity Act
 - o Expand CenteringPregnancy® program availability
 - o Increase support for community-based maternal health workers
 - o Grow the Housing Supports program supporting families in home visiting programs

Long-term Strategic Initiatives

1. Community Health Workforce Development
 - o Create sustainable funding for peer-to-peer programs
 - o Institutionalize a broadening of career pathways in community health
 - o Further support innovative training programs like Baltimore HIPPIY
2. Systemic Health Equity Solutions
 - o Address social determinants of health through policy
 - o Create sustainable funding for housing support programs
 - o Expand successful initiatives like B'more for Healthy Babies, Baltimore's city-wide initiative focused on improving birth and early childhood outcomes



The Path Forward

The recent expansion of Maryland Medicaid coverage to over 11,000 pregnant and postpartum individuals – nearly double the initial projections – demonstrates the profound unmet need in our communities. Yet this success also shows what's possible when policy meets purpose with adequate resources. Family League's comprehensive approach, from prenatal care through early childhood, is proving that change is possible. Our support of the existing B'more for Healthy Babies (BHB) Communities sites in Upton/Druid Heights in West Baltimore and Patterson Park North and East in East Baltimore, our support to expand these community-based efforts to Cherry Hill in South Baltimore, the success of our home visiting partners, and the national recognition of our innovative workforce development program all point to a holistic approach that works.

The question before Maryland legislature is not whether we can improve maternal and infant health outcomes – we have proven we can. The question is whether we are willing to make the further investments necessary to ensure every family in Baltimore, and across Maryland, has access to these life-changing programs.

The cost of inaction is measured not just in dollars, but in lives and lost potential. We have the roadmap to success. What we need now is the sustained political will and resources to scale what works.

Economic Secure Families: Forging Pathways to Prosperity

One in five Baltimore residents' lives in poverty – 19.6% compared to Maryland's 14.9% and the nation's 12.5% – the narrative of economic security in Baltimore is not just about numbers. It is about families making impossible choices between necessities, about potential entrepreneurs lacking access to capital, and about communities hungry for opportunity. But it is also a story of transformation and hope, powered by innovative partnerships and bold initiatives.

The Economic Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities

Family League's current investments in economic security initiatives have become the catalyst for leveraging much larger investments and partnerships. Through strategic collaboration and innovative program design, we are creating pathways to economic mobility that extend far beyond our initial investment.

Success Through Strategic Partnership

The ENOUGH Initiative (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Groups and Households) represents Governor Wes Moore's groundbreaking \$13.1 million investment in dismantling child poverty through place-based, community-driven solutions. This first-of-its-kind program recognizes that sustainable economic transformation requires deep community engagement, coordinated services, and long-term commitment to change.

The Local Management Board Difference

As Baltimore's Local Management Board (LMB), Family League plays a crucial role in the ENOUGH Initiative's success. LMBs serve as the vital bridge between state-level policy and community-level implementation, bringing decades of experience in coordinating services, leveraging resources, and building effective partnerships. Our position as Maryland's largest LMB allows us to:

- Coordinate across multiple sectors and stakeholders
- Ensure programs align with community needs and assets
- Provide technical assistance and capacity building
- Monitor outcomes and promote accountability
- Leverage additional resources and partnerships

Across Baltimore, eleven organizations selected as ENOUGH Initiative awardees are advancing transformative approaches to breaking the cycle of child poverty. Cherry Hill Strong and Park Heights Renaissance are leading implementation efforts with comprehensive community support systems. While planning grant recipients like Child First Authority, Elev8 Baltimore, South Baltimore Community Land Trust, The Central Baltimore Partnership, and The Y in Central Maryland are developing strategic frameworks for sustainable change. The partnership track awardees – Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council, Tendea Family Inc., Urban Strategies Inc., and We Our Us – are strengthening community connections through collaborative engagements. Together, these organizations form a powerful ENOUGH network of change-makers, each contributing unique strengths while sharing a common commitment to community-driven solutions that will create lasting impact for Baltimore's families.

Across each of the three ENOUGH tracks Family League facilitates Baltimore awardee engagement

Three grant tracks for funding community-based, cross-sector partnerships to deliver a **neighborhood action plan**.



Critical Challenges Requiring Legislative Action

1. Workforce Development Gaps
 - Misalignment between available jobs and worker skills
 - Barriers to entry for high-growth sectors
 - Need for comprehensive support services during training
2. Economic Mobility Barriers
 - Limited access to family-sustaining wages
 - Insufficient pathways to entrepreneurship
 - Further need for integrated support services

Legislative Priority Areas

Immediate Action Items

1. Expand Successful Training Programs
 - Scale up proven models like [Civic Works' Center for Sustainable Careers](#)
 - Support [JARC Baltimore's manufacturing](#) sector training
 - Enhance wrap-around support services during training
2. Strengthen Career Pathway Programs
 - Revisit the [More Jobs for Marylanders program](#) efforts (the program sunset in June, 2024)
 - Expand [EARN Maryland industry partnerships](#)
 - Further support [Road to Careers implementation](#)

Long-term Strategic Initiatives



1. Build Sustainable Career Infrastructure
 - Invest in the Build Our Future Grant Program
 - Create sustainable funding for job training programs
 - Establish career advancement pathways
2. Community Economic Development
 - Support place-based poverty reduction strategies
 - Invest in local business development
 - Creating pathways to entrepreneurship

The Path Forward

The recent launch of the \$24 million Road to Careers program demonstrates Maryland's commitment to workforce development. This six-year investment, providing \$4 million annually, creates a blueprint for sustainable economic transformation. But the program's true innovation lies in its comprehensive approach – recognizing that success requires more than just technical training. Family League's partners are already showing what is possible:

- Civic Works is creating pathways to sustainable careers in solar, roofing, and energy retrofit industries
- JARC Baltimore is transforming lives through manufacturing sector training
- Community-based organizations are providing crucial wrap-around support services

A Call to Action

The question before Maryland legislature is not whether we can create pathways to economic security – our programs have proven we can. The question is whether we will seize this moment to scale what works. Governor Moore's vision of "partnership produces progress" aligns perfectly with Family League's approach to economic transformation.

The cost of maintaining the status quo is too high – measured in lost potential, fractured families, and struggling communities. We have the models that work. We have community partnerships in place. What we need now is the legislative's support to scale these successful programs and create true pathways to prosperity for all Baltimore families.

The time for incremental change has passed. We need bold, comprehensive action that matches the scale of our economic challenges. The future of Baltimore's families – and our city's economic vitality – depends on it.

Safe and Thriving Communities: Building a Foundation for Sustainable Safety and Stability

Despite Baltimore's recent successes in reducing homicides and non-fatal shootings, violent crime remains a significant challenge in certain areas, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. The high prohibitive cost of housing in Baltimore exacerbates economic inequality, with many families struggling to maintain stable living conditions.

Violence Reduction: Positive Trends in Homicide Declines

In recent years, Baltimore City has witnessed a remarkable shift in its fight against violent crime, with 2024 marking a significant milestone in public safety. According to the [Baltimore Police Department's 2024 year-end crime report](#), the city recorded its second-lowest number of homicides in over four decades—201—a 23% decline from the 261 homicides reported in 2023. Non-fatal shootings also experienced a dramatic 34% reduction, dropping from 635 in 2023 to 414 in 2024. These successes underscore the impact of focused strategies, including Mayor Brandon Scott's [Group Violence Reduction Strategy](#), which emphasizes targeted interventions in high-crime areas and collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders.

This historic trend extends beyond the raw numbers, signifying broader advancements in community well-being. Baltimore Police Department Commissioner Richard Worley highlighted how intentional enforcement strategies, such as consolidating investigative units, refining data-driven approaches, and addressing the root causes of crime, have contributed to these achievements. The city also made strides in preventing youth violence, with a 74% reduction in teen victims of homicides and non-fatal shootings in 2024. While these accomplishments are cause for optimism, community leaders and organizations, including Mothers of Murdered Sons and Daughters, stress that the work must continue.

Family League's Community Impact

Family League is advancing Baltimore's safety and resilience with strategic investments of more than \$1.8 million dedicated to community safety initiatives focused on prevention, barrier removal, and holistic supports. This commitment reflects our focus on fostering immediate safety while building sustainable community development through proven programs and partnerships.

Proven Impact

- Violence Prevention Programs engage high-risk youth through mentorship, reducing recidivism and fostering positive behavioral change
- Collaboration with local partners has expanded Safe Passage initiatives, ensuring secure routes for over 2,000 students traveling to and from school
- Community-based trauma response teams have supported over 400 families impacted by violence, offering essential resources and counseling
- Investment in neighborhood watch programs has enhanced safety in 15 priority areas, empowering residents to take an active role in crime prevention

Legislative Priority Areas

Immediate Action Items

1. Violent Crime and Public Safety
 - Persistent violence in high-crime areas undermines community well-being
 - Youth involvement in violence underscores the need for prevention programs
 - Gaps in trauma and mental health services delay community recovery
2. Housing Affordability and Stability
 - Over 57% of renters are cost-burdened, with 33% paying more than half their income
 - Shortage of affordable housing leaves families at risk of displacement
 - Rising rents and stagnant wages deepen financial insecurity

Long-term Strategic Initiatives

1. Public Safety Infrastructure
 - Expanding funding for [Operation Respond](#) and similar violence prevention programs
 - Increasing support for the [Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention](#)
 - Enhancing collaboration between agencies, hospitals, and community-based programs
2. Housing Development and Accessibility
 - Implementing the [Housing Expansion and Affordability Act](#)
 - Modernizing building codes for manufactured and modular homes
 - Creating pathways for public-private partnerships to increase affordable housing stock

The Path Forward

Baltimore stands at a critical juncture, where innovative initiatives and proven programs create a blueprint for transformative change. By integrating public health approaches with targeted interventions, the city is redefining community safety and development. The continued success of efforts like Operation Respond, Safe Passage, and the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention provides a model for addressing violence through comprehensive, community-centered strategies.

The city's progress hinges on deepening collaborations across public, private, and community sectors. The integration of law enforcement efforts with trauma-informed care and violence prevention programs demonstrates the power of holistic approaches to public safety. Similarly, addressing the housing crisis through expanded zoning reforms, affordability incentives, and modernized building codes will stabilize families and strengthen neighborhoods.