



*Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. We champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues, positioning us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences. This multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.*

## **Testimony before the Judiciary Committee**

**In SUPPORT of**

### **House Bill 245- Child Abuse and Neglect – Failure to Report**

**Melissa Rock, Child Welfare Director, Advocates for Children and Youth**

**February 11, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 245- Child Abuse and Neglect – Failure to Report. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

It is in children's best interests that professionals who work with them be required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. In Maryland, there are two statutes that govern reporting child abuse and neglect. Maryland Family Law § 5-705 requires anyone "who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect shall notify the local department or the appropriate law enforcement agency." Maryland Family Law § 5-704 governs what are colloquially referred to as "mandatory reporters." Health practitioners, police officers, educators, or human service workers, who come to suspect child abuse or neglect while working in their professional capacity, are required to submit a report to the appropriate authorities orally and in writing.

HB 245 only governs "mandatory reporters" who knowingly fail to report child abuse or neglect. Currently, Maryland is one of only three states that does not impose penalties on mandatory reporters that intentionally fail to report the abuse of a child. However, for certain mandatory reporters there are licensure consequences for failing to report child abuse. HB 245 will merely require that when a mandatory reporter deliberately fails to comply with their obligation to report child abuse or neglect, that their professional licensing board be notified. It is by virtue of their professions that these individuals have an higher obligation to report child abuse and neglect, and at a minimum, their licensing boards should be notified when they fail to do so.

**We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 245 to demonstrate the importance that mandatory reporters comply with their obligation to report suspected child abuse and neglect.**

