



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 292- Police Training Commission – Training Requirements- Human Trafficking

**Melissa Rock, Child Welfare Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
February 9, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 292- Police Training Commission – Training Requirements- Human Trafficking. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

According to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, all children under the age of 18 who are induced to engage in commercial sex are victims of sex trafficking.¹ Due to its proximity to the I-95 corridor, Maryland is uniquely positioned as a target by sex traffickers. In fact, Maryland ranks twelfth in the nation in reports of human trafficking cases.²

The majority of children victimized through sex trafficking have already been victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.³ Studies show that as many as 80% of victims of commercial sexual exploitation are or were involved in the child welfare system.⁴ The link between involvement in the child welfare system and becoming a victim of sex trafficking has been recognized on the national level, and in September 2014, Congress passed the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act to encourage states to put protections in place safeguards in place for foster youth to prevent them from being victimized.

House Bill 292 requires training for police officers on human trafficking to prevent them from further traumatizing human trafficking victims. The training will include the laws on human trafficking, how to identify a human trafficking victim, the importance of approaching a human trafficking victim as such rather than as a criminal, how to keep human trafficking victims safe, and finally resources for these victims. **We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 292 to ensure that police officers receive the training they need to approach human trafficking victims as the victims they are rather than criminals, which will help prevent further traumatizing especially vulnerable individuals.**

¹U.S Department of State, 2000. See: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/210543.htm>

² National Human Trafficking Resource Center See: <https://traffickingresourcecenter.org/states>

³ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/human-trafficking-guidance>

⁴ Id.

