



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 Health and Government Operations Committee

In SUPPORT of

House Bill 574- Ji'Aire Lee Workgroup on the Protection of Adults with Mental Illness and Their Children

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February 16, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 574- Ji'Aire Lee Workgroup on the Protection of Adults with Mental Illness and Their Children. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

HB 574 stems from the tragic and potentially preventable death of Ji'Aire Lee, who was killed by his mother who suffered from extensive mental illness and was unable to receive mental health services. Ji'Aire's grandmother had tried, unsuccessfully, to get help for Ji'Aire's mother repeatedly. If help for Ji'Aire's mother had been available, it is likely that Ji'Aire would still be alive today. While exceptionally tragic, Ji'Aire's story is not unique. All across Maryland, families are struggling to find mental health services to meet their relatives' needs.

HB 574 will create a workgroup to bring the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene together to examine what services and protections are available for people suffering from mental health crises and how best to protect their children when they're in crisis. More specifically, the workgroup will also examine how a relative or friend can take a supervisory role over the person suffering from a mental health crisis and his/her child while the parent is going through the crisis. The workgroup is also charged with reviewing the "feasibility and efficacy" of establishing a mental health court. Although the Ji'Aire Lee workgroup is focused on Charles County, it would be valuable to explore these questions statewide.

We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 574 to create the Ji'Aire Lee Workgroup to examine how best to help parents going through mental health crises and their children and most importantly, prevent any more tragic deaths due to a families inability get the mental health services they desperately need.

