



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 579- Mental Health—Wraparound Services for Children and Youth

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 579- Mental Health—Wraparound Services for Children and Youth. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

Although most children who are in Maryland's Child Welfare system have been abused or neglected by their caretakers, there is another segment of the child welfare population who are in Maryland's child welfare system and placed in Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) and therapeutic group homes because their mental health needs are beyond their parents' capacity. These are the most expensive placements. There are eight private RTCs in Maryland, and the average daily rate is about \$476. The average length of stay is 275-300 days, making cost per placement about \$130,000 - \$140,000. The daily rates for the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICAs) are about double that. In the last year, there was an average of 175 youth placed in RTCs each month.¹ There are eight therapeutic group homes, and the average yearly rate is \$95,349.

HB 579 will allow youth to remain with their families and avoid placements in the extraordinarily expensive RTCs and group homes. In addition to saving the state millions of dollars each year, it will save those youth the trauma inherent in being removed from their families.

We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 579 to help hundreds of children and youth receive the mental health services they need while staying with their families, which will in turn save Maryland hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

¹ Maryland Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, Child Welfare Data (November 2015), p.41.

