



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 Judicial Proceedings Committee

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 577- Child Protection- Reporting - Threat of Harm

**Melissa Rock, Child Welfare Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 577- Child Protection- Reporting - Threat of Harm. 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 any child abuse or neglect they suspect. Many abused and neglected children do not realize that the abuse or neglect they experience is different from their peers. Even those children who do realize they are living in unacceptable conditions due to child abuse or neglect do not know how and where to get help. This is why it is critical that adults be required to report child abuse and 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.

Senate Bill 577 expands only what the Family Law § 5-704 (mandatory reporters) are required to report. Currently, they are only required to report when a child "has been subjected to abuse or neglect." SB 577 adds a requirement that these mandatory reporters also report "**a verbal threat of imminent serious bodily harm or death to a child.**" By requiring that these threats be reported, we help prevent certain children from ever being victims of harm.

We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 577 to expand our protections for Maryland's children, and help prevent additional child abuse and neglect.

