



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 Appropriations Committee

In SUPPORT of

House Bill 1501- Governor's Office for Children—Family Navigators Program

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

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1501- 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 facilities are the most expensive child welfare placements. In the last year, there was an average of 175 youth placed in RTCs each month.¹

HB 1501 will ensure that the Family Navigators program continues to help families identify services for their children within their communities to help prevent those children from needing expensive out-of-home placements through Maryland's foster care system. It is always more cost effective for the State and in children's best interests to be able to avoid costly out-of-home placements. Furthermore, even when an out-of-home placement is in a child's best interests, removing that child from his or her home will cause some enduring trauma. **We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1501 to help Maryland's 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.

