



*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 Budget and Taxation Committee**

**In SUPPORT of**

### **Senate Bill 373- Education - Head Start Program - Annual Appropriation**

**Melissa Rock, 0-3 Strategic Initiative Director, Advocates for Children and Youth  
February 7, 2018**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 373- Education - Head Start Program - Annual Appropriation. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

Head Start is a federal program that provides early childhood development services to low-income children and their families. "It provides children with enriched learning environments and helps families to access the services that will enable them to support their children's development and school readiness (such as parenting education, social services, health and mental health services). Most programs refer families to other community service agencies to provide the services they need."<sup>1</sup> There are 46 Head Start and Early Head Start programs across Maryland.<sup>2</sup> These programs serve 12,425 children and pregnant women including over 10,300 children ages 3-5.<sup>3</sup> Head Start is critical for increasing low-income children's school readiness.

Senate Bill 373 ensures that the state includes \$3 Million in its budget for Head Start. This funding is critical for meeting the needs of these vulnerable families. By investing in these children and families early we save the state more expensive interventions when these children are in elementary school and beyond and do not have the skills they need to succeed in school.

**We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 373 to increase school readiness for young children across all of Maryland.**

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<sup>1</sup> Sama-Miller, Emily and Baumgartner, Scott, The Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation, OPRE Report #2017-49, "Features of Programs Designed to Help Families Achieve Economic Security and Promote Child Well-Being, p.2., (September 2017). Report can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Hanna, Tresa, Maryland Head Start State Collaboration Office, "Maryland Head Start State Collaboration Office Needs Assessment Report 2015," p.4. Report can be found [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> Id.  
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