



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 Finance Committee

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 912- Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination Services Grant Program Fund (Thrive by Three Fund)

**Melissa Rock, 0-3 Strategic Initiative Director, Advocates for Children and Youth
March 1, 2018**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 912- Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination Services Grant Program Fund (Thrive by Three Fund). Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

The first three years of a child's life are especially important because when a baby is born, only 25% of the brain's development has occurred.¹ By the time a child turns 1, the brain is 70% developed, and by age 3 the brain is 85% developed.² In Maryland, as of the 2010 census, there were 217,560 children ages 0 to 3. As the national organization Zero to Three explains, "the experiences a child has during this time will shape the architecture of her brain and build the connections that allow her to develop lifelong skills like problem-solving, communication, self-control, and relationship building, that will allow her to survive and thrive within her family, community, and culture." Relatedly, science shows that early exposure to prolonged stress and anxiety can impact that child for his or her entire life partially due to the negative impact on brain development.

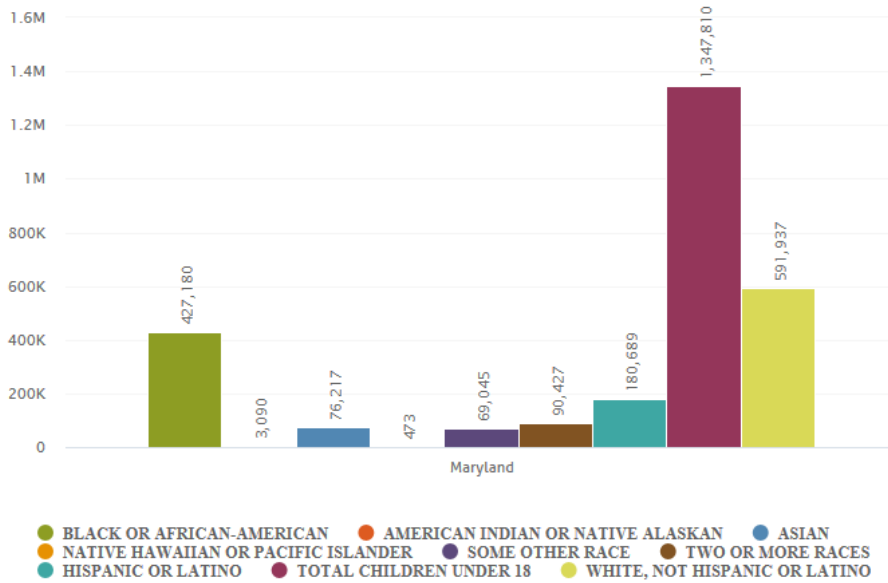
There are 58,000 children 0 to 5 (14%) in Maryland living in poverty.³ Most, if not all of those children, are experiencing toxic stress which can have a permanent detrimental impact on their ability to learn, retain information, and regulate their emotions. **This is why early interventions are so critical for young children, and without high quality care coordination families will not receive the services they need.** The racial disparities in which children in Maryland are experiencing poverty are stark (see graphs on p. 2 of this testimony).

SB 912 creates a Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination Services Grant Program Fund. There are Medicaid restrictions about what funding can be used for care coordination, so SB 912 will help overcome those barriers to connecting families with critical services. **We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 912 to ensure that families that need services are able to access them through high quality care coordination.**

¹ Bachleda, Amelia, "The Growing Brain: Neurons and Synapses and Fiber Tracts, Oh My!" Zero to Three Annual Conference, November 29, 2017.

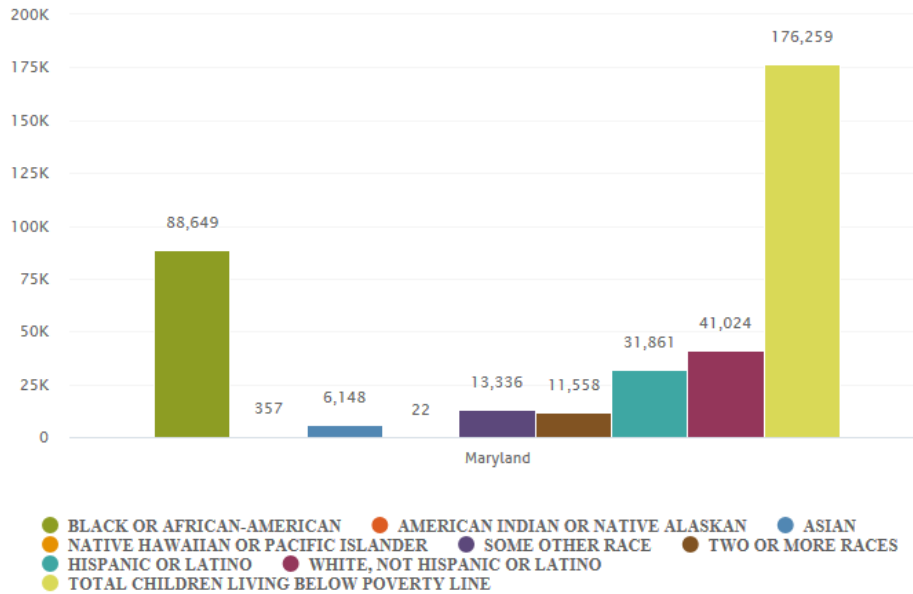
² Id.

³ <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5650-children-in-poverty-by-age-group?loc=22&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/17,18,36/12263,12264>



CHILD POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY: ALL (NUMBER) - 2016

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 KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
 A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation



CHILD POVERTY STATUS BY RACE: ALL (NUMBER) - 2016

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