



Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs across multiple issue areas that tackle racial disparities and improve outcomes to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

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Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

In SUPPORT of House Bill 0581- Juvenile Law – Probation

Ashley DeVaughn, Youth Justice Senior Policy Associate, Advocates for Children and Youth

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 0581- Juvenile Law – Probation. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) SUPPORTS this bill. **We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 0581.**

Probation is by far the most common disposition for a child to receive and the trend is growing every year. While intended to influence positive behavior change among youth, probation is shown to cause lasting harm to children when it is focused on surveillance and compliance rather than meaningful opportunities for growth. Lengthy, undetermined probation holds youth back from school and career opportunities that contribute to their rehabilitation. Worsening this issue, many families are trapped in debt as a result of the costs associated with probation orders, causing tension between children and their families at a time when a child most needs the support of a family to succeed. In a juvenile justice system that disproportionately impacts low-income minority children, these supervision fees not only place a tremendous burden on children and families, but also exacerbate existing racial and economic disparities.

We must ensure that young people have limited, purposeful juvenile probation that is consistent with their rehabilitative needs and allows them to move on from their probation requirements in a reasonable amount of time. By asking the judge to consider the youth's rehabilitative and treatment needs, House Bill 581 places the focus of probation correctly. According to the bill, after the initial one- or two-year probationary period, judges review the case again to determine if there is a rehabilitative need for an additional year of probation. Judges are well- suited to make these decisions: the law, if enacted, would provide an evaluation



according to the young person's treatment and needs to the benefit of both the young person and public safety.

For best outcomes for the youth and for the public, the focus of probation must be on the rehabilitative needs of the youth, and House Bill 581 emphasizes this need.