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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 142

**Family Law-Opioid Exposed Newborns and Parents Addicted to Opioids-Mobile Application (I'm Alive Today App)
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Rachel White, Child Welfare Policy Director
February 20, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 142 Family Law-Opioid Exposed Newborns and Parents Addicted to Opioids-Mobile Application. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) opposes this bill.

HB 142 would require the Department of Human Services to create a mobile application to be used by parents who are determined by the Department to have opioid addictions that could result in harm or potential harm to their baby. The parent would be required to check-in through the mobile application to signal that they are in fact conscious and able to care for their child. If the parent fails to check in, the application will notify the local department of this development. The department must then investigate the parent's failure to check-in.

While we appreciate the bill's effort to address the current opioid epidemic and it's intention to protect more babies for harm, the bill does not address major concerns and it is therefore our position to oppose the bill. The bill is silent on basic technological and logistical issues that may arise. What if the app stops working and the parent cannot check in? What if a parent does not have access to a cell phone? What if a parent does not pay his/her bill and no longer has service? What if there is a service outage in the area? How can we be sure that it is the actual parent who is checking in through the app and not someone else who is in possession of the parent's phone? In addition to these unanswered questions above, the bill is silent on penalties as to what happens if a parent does not check-in. While we assume this bill is not intended to bring more children into foster care, it is imperative to know what the next course of action will be.

We strongly believe that a technological fix will not keep babies alive and out of harm's way. Maryland's resources can be deployed to fund preventive services for these families in addition to continuing to build more robust Plans of Safe Care for babies who are born substance exposed and remain unified with their families.



For the reasons stated above, **ACY urges you to issue an unfavorable report on HB 142** as this bill does not protect babies which is the intention of the bill.

