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Testimony before the Judicial Proceedings Committee

In SUPPORT with amendments of House Bill 606- Juvenile Justice Reform Council

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March 26, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 606- Juvenile Justice Reform Council. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY), CLIA, NAACP SUPPORTS this bill with amendments.

The formation of the Juvenile Justice Reform Council is Maryland's opportunity to lead the nation in a **bold and innovative initiative that addresses how we proactively prevent system involvement through early intervention**. This multidisciplinary council can lead the way on how we deal with youth crime, address the root causes of crime to prevent system involvement through early intervention, and develop a systemic restorative approach that holds youth accountable while repairing the harm done to the community and crime victims. Most importantly, we must produce rehabilitated young people that can reenter our communities as emotionally and economically self-sufficient members.

We would like to request HB 606 and SB 856 be reconciled with the current amendments adopted. Additionally, to ensure this work is done with fidelity there are necessary changes we need to make to this bill

We need:

One table, many voices—Create one Council with each member having an equal voice. There should be no separation between the advisory board and the Council as it must be one unit. To increase community support and buy-in, the Council should be comprised of Maryland residents, organizations and institutions that:

- i. Have the authority and discretion to influence statewide policies and practices;
- ii. Are local subject matter experts that understand the needs, behavior and thinking of children and youth;



- iii. Understand key components of the youth justice system—from the school-to-prison pipeline and diversionary programs to youth detention centers. Include former system-involved individuals and restorative justice professionals;
- iv. Best represent all areas of contact and support that youth currently have or may need to make wiser decisions to prevent system involvement or better decisions as they return to their communities; and
- v. Represent overly affected communities statewide and is racially diverse

Shared comprehensive goals—reform starts before system involvement and must include three types of strategies that are data-driven (i) proactive, (ii) system involvement and (iii) post-system involvement objectives. The goals will create an interconnected framework to address barriers and offer solutions. We run the risk of missing crucial considerations that will limit the Council’s success when goals are not interconnected. The goals must address:

- i. Early interventions—the Council must focus on the root causes of system involvement such as poverty, poor education, unstable housing, food insecurity, adverse childhood experiences (trauma) and mentorship as a proactive way to prevent system involvement
- ii .System involvement—the Council must focus on fixing the current system and shifting from large institutions to specialized care/continuum of situations
- iii. Post System- Involvement—the Council must focus on previously system-involved youth and their successful reintegration to become self-sufficient contributing members of society.

We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 606