EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS

POSITIVE LIFE EXPERIENCES
Advocates for Children and Youth believes that Maryland’s children are the greatest gift it can give to the future. For this reason, our mission is to build a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.

We gather and analyze data to understand the scope of inequities that our children and youth face. We are continuously invited into communities to get a proximate view by folks who experience inequities and negative policy outcomes the most. Oftentimes, these inequities have far reaching effects as they are caused by issues that interconnect and intersect. Therefore, our advocacy will reflect this reality and allow us to effectively address these issues as we introduce and support policies that ensure that every young person in the State has equitable access to resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Hence our theme, Equity for All Kids.

**WHY ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH MATTERS:**

We are the only statewide child advocacy organization that works to effectively address multiple interconnecting and intersecting issues through a racial equity lens. We will continue to do so in Maryland’s 2020 General Assembly as we focus on legislation that promotes the following:

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<tr>
<th>FAIR, UNBIASED TREATMENT</th>
<th>ACADEMICALLY PREPARED YOUTH</th>
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<td>We will push for equitable treatment of all children and provide them with an opportunity to rebound.</td>
<td>We will advocate to ensure that all young people get the resources, education and supports they need to thrive.</td>
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<th>POSITIVE LIFE EXPERIENCES</th>
<th>HEALTHY KIDS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES</th>
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<td>We will advocate for keeping childhood a positive experience as we address trauma and the fulfillment of the basic needs in life.</td>
<td>We will push for policy and programs that support healthy and safe living, learning and working environments in all communities.</td>
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Keeping Moms and Their Babies Healthy and Alive

There are significant racial disparities in birth outcomes for Black women and babies. **Black women in Maryland are 3-4 times more likely to die after childbirth** than white women and **the infant mortality rate for Black babies is almost three times higher** than for White babies. These racial disparities are largely due to the epigenetic impact of racism and the differential treatment Black individuals experience with medical professionals.

**Impact:** Eliminating the sub-par treatment Black women receive by medical professionals will go a long way towards eliminating the negative outcomes these women experience throughout pregnancy and childbirth.

**Need for legislation:** There is a need to reduce the mortality rate for Black women and their children.

**What the legislation will do:** This law will create a Doula Technical Assistance Group to study how to increase access to doulas for Black women across Maryland. Having a doula throughout pregnancy, at childbirth and post-partum is one of the few interventions that improves the birth outcomes for Black women and lowers the racial disparities.

**Contact:** Melissa Rock at mrock@acy.org or 410-547-9200 ext. 3024

Giving Shelter: Right to Consent to Shelter for Unaccompanied Homeless Minors

During the 2016-17 school year, Maryland public schools identified 2,337 unaccompanied homeless students, who lacked stable housing and were not in physical custody of a parent or guardian. **Unaccompanied homeless minors are often unable to access safe shelter, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, dangerous living situations, and school drop-out.**

**Impact:** Minors experiencing homelessness do not have the legal capacity to consent to shelter and supportive services. While we do have a child welfare system that provides shelter and supportive services, **if a child does not meet the statutory definition of abuse and neglect, they are ineligible for services and will remain homeless.** Many Maryland non-profit organizations choose not to shelter unaccompanied homeless minors because it is unclear under Maryland law whether and how they can do so lawfully.

**Need for legislation:** There needs to be legislation to clarify and designate that ability for unaccompanied youth to seek and receive available shelter to avoid homelessness.

**What the legislation will do:** Advocates for Children and Youth will work to establish that an unaccompanied minor in need of shelter **has the same legal capacity as an adult to consent to shelter** and supportive services, thereby incentivizing non-profit organizations to shelter this extremely vulnerable and underserved population.

**Contact:** Rachel White at rwhite@acy.org or 410-547-9200 ext. 3019
Disaggregating and Disseminating Data to Serve Youth Better

Children and families served by Maryland’s child welfare system, as well as the public, must have a high level of confidence that the system will act in a child’s best interests and will respond to the child’s needs by providing the services and interventions best matched with that child’s specific needs.

**Impact:** To engender this high level of confidence in the child welfare system, there should be well-publicized, easily accessible, and transparent data indicating the outcomes and experiences of the children involved in the child welfare system. Although the Department of Human Services (DHS) does release monthly reports with data of children involved with the child welfare system, and a yearly report with several indicators disaggregated by race, gaps in the data provided remain and the yearly report is not readily accessible to the public.

**Need for legislation:** A law is needed to require DHS to provide more detailed disaggregated data as a measure to determine the progress made to serve the most vulnerable.

**What the legislation will do:** Advocates for Children and Youth will advocate for readily accessible and consistent monthly outcome data for youth experiencing foster care and homelessness to include but not limited to: the number of children in the custody of the local department who have siblings living in different placements; the number of children with Individualized Education Plans; the number of children with 504 plans; the number of youth who have been retained a grade; and the number of children in a postsecondary program.

Watching the Budget: Child Welfare Budgetary Priorities

In 2018, the Maryland General Assembly took historic action to prevent and end youth homelessness by passing the Ending Youth Homelessness Act (SB 1218). Legislators recognized that state investment in housing and supportive services designed for youth is critical to ensuring a successful transition to adulthood and out of poverty. The EYHA ensures that Maryland youth who are on their own without stable housing or family support are able to meet basic needs for shelter and safety, obtain and maintain education and employment, and ultimately build the stability they need to thrive.

**Need for legislation:** For the Act to be effective, there must be funding to implement strategies and programs to prevent youth homelessness.

**What the legislation will do:** Advocates for Children and Youth will continue to fight during the 2020 session to ensure that EYHA is adequately funded to meet the needs of all unaccompanied homeless youth throughout Maryland.

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