



To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
From: Advocates for Children and Youth
Re: Senate Bill 905: Juvenile Services - Workgroup to Develop Evidence-Based, Research-Based, and Culturally Competent Practices
Date: February 28, 2021
Position: Support

Dear Chairman Smith and Honorable Members of the Committee.

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) was founded in 1987 by a group of prominent child advocates in Maryland who saw the need for an independent organization to advocate for the needs of the state's children and families in the community, the media, and the public policy arena. Today, ACY builds a stronger Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.

ACY supports Senate Bill 905: Juvenile Services - Workgroup to Develop Evidence-Based, Research-Based, and Culturally Competent Practices (SB 905). The bill would create a workgroup that will complete a baseline assessment of and then publish an inventory of the use of evidence-based, research-based, and culturally competent practices in child welfare, juvenile rehabilitation, and children's mental health services.

Evidence-based and research-based practices are the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual juveniles. Evidence-based juvenile justice practice means integrating practitioner expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research. Cultural competence is defined as "the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal development of client and client services."¹ A culturally competent system understands the need to approach situations differently and shows respect toward those of diverse backgrounds to provide effective services for all clients.²

SB 905 acknowledges that the State's youth services as a whole must be capable of effectively rehabilitating youth from diverse backgrounds and that providing culturally sensitive policies and practices are essential to prepare youth upon their release from the system.

Therefore, ACY urges this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 905. Should you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Mariama Boney, Interim Executive Director for Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY), at mboney@acy.org.

¹ Sue, D.W. and Sue, D., *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice* (5th Edition).

² Cross, T.L., Bazon, B.J., Dennis, K.W., Issac, M.R., *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who are Severely Emotionally Disturbed*, CASSP Technical Assistance Center, Georgetown University Child Development Center, 1-75 (1989).