

February 13, 2020

Carol Stern
4550 North Park Avenue, Apt T106, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
sterncss@gmail.com / 301-951-3936

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 624
Juvenile Law - Child Interrogation Protection Act

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbearly, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Carol Stern

I am testifying in favor of HB 624 as a resident of Chevy Chase, Maryland, in Montgomery County's District 16.

I am also a Jew and our tradition tasks us with carrying out the directive issued in Deuteronomy 16:20, "Tzedek, tzedek tirdof - Justice, justice shall you pursue." The Jewish sages explain that the word tzedek is repeated not only for emphasis but to teach us that in our pursuit of justice, our means must be as just as our ends. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan wrote "teach us to respect the integrity of every human soul be it that of a friend or stranger, child or adult." When we are working to reform our criminal justice system, we must demand that it operates in accordance with these deeply held Jewish beliefs.

Currently, police officers in Maryland have little limiting their right to interrogate children. As a mother of two children and a grandmother of three, I cannot imagine allowing my children or grandchildren to be interrogated without a lawyer and/or their parents being present. This is not the kind of justice that our State of Maryland should allow for anyone. A juvenile may not understand their rights or the warnings given to them. Many may not have the education, experience, background and capacity to even know that they can stay silent, ask for an attorney, or call their parents. This bill adds much needed reforms for treating juveniles in the justice system with equality and the respect that all people deserve.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 624.