



February 15, 2023

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Quaker Voice of Maryland is submitting this testimony in FAVOR of SB0093 – Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction.

Quakers believe that all people can change and have historically been active in criminal justice system reform work to ensure that people who enter the system are provided with the appropriate rehabilitative services so they can return to our communities as successful members. This bill stands out to our members as important legislation because it would protect our youth who are entering the justice system. By establishing that all teens charged under the age of 18 begin their cases in juvenile court we would be supporting better outcomes for the youth and the community.

There are many reasons this legislation can lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities, but I will highlight two in this piece of testimony: (1) Youth who are charged in adult court may be less likely to have access to rehabilitative services that are appropriate for their needs, which can lead to reoffending in the future, and (2) Youth who are charged as adults are at an increased risk of sexual assault, physical harm, and being placed in solitary confinement as a protection mechanism. To be clear, this bill does not mean youth cases can never reach adult court, but it does change the way youth charged with serious felonies enter the justice system.

Quaker Voice of Maryland chose this bill as one of our legislative priorities for 2023 because of the positive effect on criminal justice reform this would have on our State. If you are interested in learning more about the issue and how passing this legislation will lead to positive change for youth I recommend you read the Maryland Youth Justice Coalition bill fact sheet:

<https://advancemaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/YES-Act-Fact-Sheet-MYJC.docx-2.pdf>

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

Molly Finch

Working Group Member, on behalf of Quaker Voice of Maryland

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