



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 93 – Juvenile Court -- Jurisdiction

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

Date: February 16, 2023

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports the use of specialized judges, counseling services, and coordination of programs and services provided by the state agencies in the administration of juvenile cases. We also believe that these programs and services must be geared to working with the families of the juveniles involved in order to be effective.

SB 93 would expand juvenile court jurisdiction over children charged with committing certain acts. The specialized procedures of juvenile courts recognize that children at this age are in a stage of neuro-psychological development that requires different treatment than adult offenders. Minors are particularly vulnerable as they are less likely to understand legal terminology and procedures. Expanding the jurisdiction of the juvenile court would avoid the exponential harm experienced by child offenders when introduced into the adult justice system. Young offenders are also vulnerable to violence, manipulation and abuse when in detention. Restoring the jurisdiction of the juvenile court would also address the disparate racial impact of prosecuting juveniles as adults, as described in the Racial Equity Impact Note prepared for SB 165, a similar bill considered in the 2022 session of the General Assembly.

Because the provision of services tailored to the needs of juveniles is essential for the successful implementation of this bill, we also urge the General Assembly to work with the Governor to ensure that juvenile justice services are adequately funded.

We urge a favorable report on SB 93.