

**Hearing: February 16, 2023**  
**Claire Landers**  
**Baltimore, MD, 21209**

**SB93\_ClaireLanders\_FAV**  
**Juvenile Court- Jurisdiction (Youth Equity & Safety Act)-**  
**Ending Automatic Charging of Youth as Adults**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Claire Landers, Baltimore County resident

I am a resident of Baltimore County, District 11, and a parent urging you to support SB93. Last year I viewed a video of a very young Black child being held alone in an adult detention facility in Baltimore County, supposedly because space in a more appropriate setting was unavailable. This boy was distraught, crying and begging his attorney to take him home. It was disturbing and heartrending to watch a recording of a child's helpless anguish in that facility. Aware that an incident like this happened a mere 10 minute's drive from my own child's home compels me to plead with this committee to support SB93 to end the practice of automatically charging children and teenagers as adults for certain offenses in Maryland.

No matter the offense attributed to a minor in custody, any and every young person should be afforded of rigorous professional assessment(s) and impartial judicial hearing(s) before facing the full, enormous weight of prosecution as an adult for those offenses.

I'm certain you will hear and read other more expert testimony that will provide evidence and data for the many ways autocharging a) disproportionately harms Black children and teens and impacts them forward into their adult lives, b) how autocharging young people super-charges recidivism - thus, negatively impacting society in the longterm as well, and c) that autocharging places Maryland squarely in the company of other states more notoriously recognized for their own historically racist practices around prosecution and incarceration of Black people in America. That expert testimony should be enough to persuade you on the merits of SB93.

But writing as a mother in Maryland, I want to put forth another consideration beyond data and politics: Autocharging children and teenagers is a draconian, dickensian practice that does not befit the best values we aspire to in Maryland in 2023. With genuine joy and pride, General Assembly leaders commissioned and installed the portrait of Justice Thurgood Marshall in the halls where our governance unfolds. Likewise, the plaza fronting America's oldest state capitol building is graced by a sculpture of Black children seated in the towering shadow of Justice Marshall. Maryland proudly asserts that Justice Marshall is "one of our own"; so it is incumbent upon our State Legislature to demonstrate that Marshall's legal legacy of protecting vulnerable Black children still animates how our justice system will treat all children in Maryland going forward.