

BILL#SB120_AnitaLampel_UNFAV

Date of Hearing 2/13/2024

Anita Lampel

Bethesda, MD, 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB#120 - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
Juvenile Law-Custodial Interrogation-Parental Consultation

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Anita Lampel

OPENING: My name is Anita Lampel. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony against SB#120, Juvenile Law-Custodial Interrogation-Parental Consultation.

I am a retired psychologist, who headed a large Child-Adolescent Mental Health Department and subsequently was a Court-appointed expert in numerous cases involving juveniles. I consulted with Departments of Juvenile Justice and helped draft legislation at the state level. I belong to Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation and am a member of the Women's Democratic Club of Montgomery County. From multiple perspectives—moral, ethical, psychological—this bill is wrong. It violates all the research we have on children offering false confessions, children confused in interrogation settings, and puts parents in the role of attorneys.

My experience with the children in the justice system was saddening. Often they are behind in reading and other skills at school. Their parents try to help, to intervene, and are NOT equipped to tell their child whether they should answer questions or how they should answer questions that may put their child in jeopardy of juvenile court, detention, or even adult court and prison. Would your mother have been able to do that when you were 14? Mine certainly would not have been. And mine would have been emotionally overwhelmed at the idea that her daughter had been picked up and faced criminal charges.

Please consider carefully all the research that helped the Legislature decide just last year that children need attorneys before answering questions that put them in jeopardy of their futures. You acted wisely then. Do so again.

I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on SB#120.