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SB 0323 – Youth Charging Reform Act – Support – February 2, 2026

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am a registered voter of District 7a. I am 62-years-old husband, father, neighbor, employee, tax paying Marylander, and I imagine I have the same fears as most adults related to youth and crime. I sorrowfully share that who I am today is a far cry from who I was five decades ago.

Maryland law allowed 15-year-old me to be adjudicated and serve nearly 43 consecutive years in the adult prison system for my horrible youthful transgressions. Rape. Kidnapping. Armed Robbery. Unauthorized use of a Vehicle. Assault. Possession of a Weapon. All are horrible charges. I am truly sorry for the harm I caused and continue to pay my debt to society.

A 14-15-year-old is different from a 17-18-year-old. Both are different from a 20-30-year-old. Yet, MD Law has treated unprivileged youth as adults simply because they committed actions which an adult could be sentenced to life for committing. This practice of deeming mostly unprivileged mid-teen boys as incorrigible offenders is a shame. I could argue that this practice undermines public safety because most of these youthful offenders exit the adult system far worse than they entered. They are faced with collateral barriers of reintegration. They are certainly not afforded the rehabilitative services and care afforded their counterparts in the juvenile justice system.

How can anyone of us not applaud a bill that clearly distinguishes that 13, 14, and 15-year-old delinquent youth from an adult criminal? Perhaps, one out a dozen of us survives the adult system by having a successful long-term reintegration. I believe in this truth so strongly that I expose my vulnerabilities. I urge you to break this debilitating cycle by voting favorably for SB323.