

February 4, 2026

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TESTIMONY ON #SB323 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)

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

FROM: Rachel Metz

My name is Rachel Metz. I am a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB323, Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act).

My support is based on both values and data. In terms of values, I believe that youth should be given support in correcting problematic behavior and charting a course towards fulfilling adult lives. The adult prison system is not set up to do this.

On the contrary, research shows that youth charged as adults are at increased risk of physical and sexual assault and isolation from their families, which may contribute to future criminality. And [Maryland-specific data](#) show that youth transferred out of adult court and treated by DJS have much lower recidivism rates than those in DPSCS. This bill would not eliminate consequences for youth - youth charged with serious crimes would not just be released back into the community and judges would be able to decide if adult court is appropriate in particular situations. But it does establish a norm of treating children as children rather than as adults.

This is why three commissions appointed by three different Governors have recommended ending automatic charging, including in the report released last year by the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform, Emerging & Best Practices (CJJR) created by the General Assembly.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB323.