



**Local power, collective voice
for Maryland's children, youth and families**

February 4, 2025

SUPPORT – SB323 - Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards, I am writing in support of **SB323 - Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)** to end the practice of automatically charging youth as adults – a process that now occurs without the thoughtful deliberation of a judge. This bill would end automatic charging for all fourteen and fifteen-year-olds and limit the offenses that sixteen and seventeen-year-olds can be charged with. This will help to ensure that the decision as to whether to charge a young person as an adult is given the serious consideration by a juvenile court judge that this significant, life-altering decision requires. The negative impacts of treating youth as adults are substantial and often lifelong, affecting individual youth, their families, and communities.

Local Management Boards in each county and jurisdiction in the State of Maryland conduct community needs assessments and address the needs of children and families in their respective jurisdiction. We regularly work with justice involved youth. An overwhelming majority of youth charged as adults do not receive a criminal conviction. The charging of youth in adult court, and the increasing likelihood the case moves to the juvenile system creates backlogs of cases, expends state dollars unnecessarily, and exacerbates the inefficiencies experienced by all system stakeholders.

We urge you to support SB323 - Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act) to promote efficiency, fairness, and positive public safety outcomes for Maryland communities.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Brown, PhD
Legislative Chair
Maryland Association of Local Management Boards