



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Commission on Juvenile Justice

Marc Elrich
County Executive

James C. Bridgers, Jr. Ph.D., MBA
Director

January 29, 2026

SB323 - Favorable

Senator William C. Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Smith:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 323 on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (MC CJJ).

MC CJJ was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive, the County Council and the Juvenile Court on matters concerning juvenile justice. Our work includes gathering and disseminating information from public and private agencies serving youth, monitoring juvenile justice programs and services, visiting facilities, closely following relevant State and local legislation, and making recommendations regarding juvenile needs. MC CJJ is composed of appointed, volunteer citizen members, and agency members representing the Child Welfare Services Program, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender, the Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

Maryland automatically charges more youth (ages 14–17) in adult court than any state except Alabama, without judicial review. While most cases are later transferred to juvenile court, the process is lengthy, leaving children in adult facilities—at risk of harm. Over 77% of these youth are Black, and they face harsher sentences than white peers for similar offenses.

Three commissions appointed by three different Governors have recommended ending automatic charging, including the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform, Emerging & Best Practices (CJJR) created by the General Assembly in their [2025 Commission report](#).

For these reasons, we request a Favorable report on SB323.

Sincerely,

Melissa Goemann

Melissa Goemann, Co-Chair,

Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice