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The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Good Afternoon, Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and the members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am Tara Jackson, State's Attorney for Prince George's County, and I am submitting this testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 323, also known as **Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)**.

Senate Bill 323 would impose significant new responsibilities on an already overwhelmed juvenile justice system without providing the resources necessary to meet those demands. Placement for treatment in juvenile facilities is limited, staffing shortages are widespread, and victim and witness support services remain critically under-resourced. Due to longstanding institutional challenges, the Department of Juvenile Services has struggled to meet the complex needs of those in its care, many of whom have extensive prior system involvement, raising serious concerns about further expanding its jurisdiction and responsibilities.

Additionally, the Courts already have the discretion and expertise to make individualized waiver decisions based on the facts of each case. Senate Bill 323 risks undermining that careful decision-making and could lead to unintended consequences that compromise accountability, public safety, and meaningful rehabilitation. This legislation would also create a significant unfunded mandate on local governments and add to already unmanageable caseloads, raising real due process concerns. Before imposing a mandate, the General Assembly should ensure that the juvenile justice system has the capacity and resources to implement it effectively.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tara H. Jackson".

Tara H. Jackson
State's Attorney