

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 389

(Senator Folden)

Judicial Proceedings

Minors Convicted as Adults - Sentencing - Transfer to Juvenile Court

This bill authorizes a court to transfer a minor convicted as an adult to the juvenile court for sentencing if the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that the individual against whom the minor is convicted of committing the offense previously committed a sex crime (under Title 3, Subtitle 3 of the Criminal Law Article) or human trafficking (under Title 3, Subtitle 11 of the Criminal Law Article) against the minor within three months before the offense for which the minor was convicted. If a juvenile (the minor) is transferred to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, the juvenile court must make a juvenile disposition.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The change is procedural in nature and is not expected to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill is procedural in nature and is not expected to materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

In general, the juvenile court has jurisdiction over a child who is alleged to be delinquent, in need of supervision (CINS), or who has received a citation for specified violations. The

juvenile court also has jurisdiction over peace order proceedings in which the respondent is a child.

The juvenile court has jurisdiction over a child who is at least age 10 and is alleged to have committed an act that would, if committed by an adult, be (1) a “crime of violence ” (as defined in § 14-101 of the Criminal Law Article); (2) specified crimes involving handguns and firearms; (3) aggravated cruelty to animals; or (4) third-degree sexual offense. Outside of these circumstances, the juvenile court does not have jurisdiction over a child younger than age 13 for purposes of a delinquency proceeding, and such a child may not be charged with a crime. A child of any age may be adjudicated a CINS and subject to the juvenile court’s jurisdiction under applicable provisions.

The juvenile court does not have jurisdiction over (1) a child at least age 14 alleged to have committed an act which, if committed by an adult, would be a crime punishable by life imprisonment; (2) a child at least age 16 alleged to have violated specified traffic or boating laws; (3) a child at least age 16 alleged to have committed specified crimes (violent crimes, firearms crimes, etc.); or (4) a child who previously has been convicted as an adult of a felony and is subsequently alleged to have committed an act that would be a felony if committed by an adult. These cases are tried in adult criminal court.

Transfers of Jurisdiction

However, for items (1), (3), and (4) above, the adult criminal court may transfer the case back to juvenile court before trial or before a plea is entered if the court determines from a preponderance of the evidence that transfer is in the interest of the child or society and specified conditions are met. This is often referred to as “reverse waiver.” A reverse waiver is not permitted in certain circumstances, such as when the child was previously convicted in an unrelated case excluded from the jurisdiction of the juvenile court or when the alleged crime is murder in the first degree and the accused child was at least age 16 when the alleged crime was committed.

The juvenile court may waive its jurisdiction (which transfers the case to adult court) with respect to a petition alleging delinquency if the petition concerns a child who is at least age 15 or a child who is charged with committing an act which, if committed by an adult, would be punishable by life imprisonment. The court may waive its jurisdiction only after it has conducted a waiver hearing held prior to the adjudicatory hearing and after notice has been given to all parties. The court may not waive its jurisdiction over a case unless it determines, from a preponderance of the evidence presented at the hearing, that the child is an unfit subject for juvenile rehabilitative measures.

The juvenile court must consider the following criteria when making a waiver determination: (1) the child’s age; (2) the mental and physical condition of the child;

(3) the child's amenability to any available treatment; (4) the nature of the offense and the child's alleged participation in it; and (5) public safety. These criteria must be considered individually and in relation to each other on the record.

Statutory provisions also authorize a court exercising criminal jurisdiction to transfer the child to the juvenile court at sentencing if (1) as a result of trial or a plea, all charges under specified provisions that excluded jurisdiction from the juvenile court do not result in a finding of guilty and (2) pretrial transfer of the case was prohibited under specified statutes, or the court did not transfer jurisdiction after a reverse waiver hearing. In determining whether to transfer jurisdiction at sentencing, the court must consider (1) the child's age; (2) the mental and physical condition of the child; (3) the child's amenability to any available treatment; (4) the nature of the child's acts as proven in the trial or admitted to in a plea; and (5) public safety.

Juvenile Court Dispositions

Generally, a disposition hearing is held by the juvenile court to determine whether a child who has been adjudicated delinquent needs or requires the court's guidance, treatment, or rehabilitation and, if so, the nature of the guidance, treatment, or rehabilitation. Among other options, and subject to specified limitations, a juvenile court may:

- place the child on probation or under supervision in the child's own home or in the custody or under the guardianship of a relative or other fit person, on terms the court deems appropriate, including community detention;
- commit the child to the custody or guardianship of the Department of Juvenile Services or other agency on terms that the court considers appropriate, including designation of the type of facility where the child is to be accommodated; or
- order the child or the child's parents, guardian, or custodian to participate in rehabilitative services that are in the best interest of the child and the family.

Sentencing of a Minor Convicted as an Adult

When sentencing a minor convicted as an adult, a criminal court may impose a sentence less than the minimum term required under law and may not impose a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole or release.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 601 and HB 445 of 2024, HB 170 of 2023, and SB 769 and HB 754 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: HB 441 (Delegate Simpson, *et al.*) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 3, 2025
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