



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP OF HARFORD COUNTY
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THE REVEREND MARÍA MCCABE, MINISTER

February 13th, 2020

Juvenile Law – Child Interrogation Protection Act (HB624)
Maryland House of Delegates
House Judiciary Committee **Support**

Dear legislator:

It is every parent's worst nightmare... not to know where our children are or why they cannot be found. We can't keep ourselves from imagining the most fearful scenario. They've been hurt, attacked or become too sick to come home.

It is unthinkable to me that our law enforcement officers, who have sworn to protect and serve, repeatedly allow families to endure this nightmare. But this is exactly what happens over and over again in Maryland. As a mother and a woman of faith, I feel very strongly that this is morally wrong and deeply harmful to our communities. And it doesn't support good law enforcement. Especially when research tells us that the most effective policing depends on relationships of trust between officers and the communities they serve.

Moreover, the high number of wrongful arrests and false confessions that occur when children do not receive the legal and familial support they need, do more harm than good to a criminal justice system that is already massively overburdened. Too many of our children and their families suffer trauma and injuries that could easily be avoided and are far less easily mended.

I have worked with many law enforcement officers in my career as a television news journalist and as an ordained minister, now serving the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County. It is a difficult and often heartbreaking job. But support for law enforcement should not come as the result of denying the human and civil rights of children and families. For this reason it is especially important to me that HB 624 spells out the rights of children to remain silent and to be represented by an attorney. How can we justify denying rights to children that we guarantee to adults? As a society, we are better than that.

I strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB624. It is morally wrong for children to be detained and questioned without the knowledge of their parents or guardians. This legislation is long overdue.

Sincerely,
Rev. María Uitti McCabe
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County