



"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"

**Testimony submitted to House Judiciary Committee
February 18, 2020**

House Bill 933 – Juvenile Offenders - Dual Sentencing

Support

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a statewide network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, supports House Bill 933, Juvenile Offenders - Dual Sentencing. Youth Service Bureaus provide prevention, intervention and treatment services to at-risk youth and work to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system. HB933 is modeled after the Missouri Model which is often looked at as a Blue Print for reform in the juvenile justice system.

This Dual Sentencing Model is a blended sentencing option in which a juvenile and an adult sentence are simultaneously imposed, with the execution of the adult sentence suspended. This bill would keep youth in the Juvenile System where they receive more rehabilitative and educational services. We believe that this action corresponds with the State's movement toward a juvenile system that is developmentally informed.

A developmentally informed approach to juvenile justice recognizes the need to hold youth accountable for their actions while also offering them the resources and opportunities to divert them from future involvement with the juvenile justice system. It recognizes that youth are still maturing and that their brains are not fully developed until after age 21. Allowing youth to be held in the juvenile system will decrease the exposure of youth to the adult system, a system whose mission is punishment rather than rehabilitation. The bill does provide provisions for movement to the adult system if a youth reoffends or violates condition of the sentence.

A developmentally informed system is also fair and works to ensure that all youth receive fair and equal treatment. This bill will assist the State of Maryland in addressing racial and ethnic disparities (RED) found in the juvenile justice system. Data in Maryland shows that youth of color are disproportionately impacted at each decision point in the juvenile justice system. The Data Resource Guide 2018 for the Department of Juvenile Services shows that 70% of youth who came into their system were youth of color. Of the 8,800 youth whose case were formalized, 78% were youth of color. Of youth Committed to DJS care, 88% were youth of color. This bill will help ensure fair treatment for youth of color as currently they are more likely to be charged as adults. The 2016 GOCCP and DJS report "Juveniles Charged as Adults and Held in Adult Detention Facilities: Trend Analysis and Population Projections" shows that 87% of

youth charged as adults in 2016 were youth of color. This bill will ensure that all youth are not pushed further into the juvenile justice system and that youth will receive the services of the juvenile system whose goal is rehabilitation.

MAYSB believes that following a developmental informed approach to juvenile justice is important and allows youth the opportunity to be held accountable for their actions.

We respectfully ask you to Support this bill.

Respectfully Submitted:

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