

February 4, 2021

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB136/HB315
Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Heidi Rhodes

My name is Heidi Rhodes and I live in Colesville, District 14. I am providing this testimony in support of SB136/HB315, Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act.

The Jewish text that shapes my religious and moral conviction that juveniles must have a right to counsel is the directive issued in Deuteronomy 16:20, "Tzedek, tzedek tirdof - Justice, justice shall you pursue." When we are working to reform our criminal justice system, we must demand that it operates in accordance with these deeply held Jewish beliefs.

When I first read this bill, I could not see any situation in which anyone could be against it. In what situation would it be justice to not provide legal counsel and notice to parents or guardians when a minor is interrogated by police? In the ten commandments we are taught to honor our mother and father. Under this construct I taught my daughter to respect adults in authority, whether it is her teachers or police.

Because of this teaching, I believe that if she was interrogated by police without legal counsel and parental notification, she would not have the discernment to know that those interrogating her did not have her best interests at heart. I would be horrified to hear of any child being questioned without these rights.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB136/HB315.