

February 4, 2021

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SBI36/HB315
Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act

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

FROM: Samantha Blau

My name is Samantha Blau, I am a resident of Baltimore's Patterson Place neighborhood, in District 46. I am also a former educator with over ten year's experience working with students and teachers in Baltimore City and across the state of Maryland. As a teacher, an organizer, and a resident of Baltimore I submit this testimony in favor of SBI36/HB315, Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act.

Children are regarded as the hope of the future in every society, yet among the Jewish people this concept is enhanced by the view that children are a Divine trust and guarantors of the future. The Book of Psalms (127 v.3) declares "children are an inheritance from the Lord."

It is our sacred duty to treat children lovingly and humanely. Yet children do not have many rights in our society. In past sessions, this committee has heard testimony on behalf of Maryland Dreamers, young people brought to this country by their parents and not of their own volition. I am happy that they are here, but their initial residency was not their choice. The Economic Matters committee has heard testimony on behalf of paid sick leave, without which sick kids whose parents could not afford to stay home would be forced to go to school with strep throat and fevers. Right now, a police officer in the state of Maryland can pick a child up for questioning, decide that the child has waived their right to counsel, and go about questioning them.

Before I can pick up my nieces and nephews from summer camp, the camp facility needs prior authorization from their parents and I need to produce a state issued photo ID. I wonder how, in a society that claims to value children, their futures, and their safety, we can currently allow a stranger to take possession of a child and not notify their parent or guardian. How can we allow a person not known to a child to make a potentially life-altering decision for them, like the decision as to whether they understand the implications of the right to counsel? The right to counsel is so fundamental that it is guaranteed by a Supreme Court case. I am disgusted to think that our state touts our children's high test scores, but denies them access to their parent/guardian and legal representation because we assume an adult with a badge knows what the right decision is for a child they don't know.

I urge this committee to **issue a favorable report on SBI36/HB315 as swiftly as possible.** I care about our children and they need this law.