

Submitted by: Rev. Marlon B. Tilghman (a Harford County, MD Pastor, U.S. Marine Corps SSgt, retired commission '92), 1118 Marksworth Road, Gwynn Oak, Maryland 21207.

Dear Luke Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, *“The law cannot control how people regard each other, but it can mandate how people treat each other.”*

BRIDGE Maryland, Inc., which represents several of the legislative districts on this committee, and throughout the state, want our most vulnerable population in Maryland to receive due process appropriate for their maturity and with the understanding of their redemptive future. To treat children and youth like adults with similar or lesser crimes is an inditement of their potential and sacred worth. We support this bill for the following reasons. The bill will require informal adjustment of misdemeanors (excluding handgun possession) and non-violent felonies for all youth who have not previously been adjudicated delinquent. This action will expand the use of diversion and reduce any racial disparities caused by the discretionary decisions of Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and the State’s Attorney. The bill will eliminate the requirement that DJS forward complaints of non-violent felonies to the State’s Attorney for approval of informal adjustment. This action will expand the use of diversion while preserving the State’s Attorney’s opportunity to petition formal charges if the informal adjustment is unsuccessful. The bill will eliminate the requirement of victim consent but requires reasonable efforts to contact the victim in order for informal adjustment to proceed. And this bill does away with the requirement in HB169's section (E-1)(1)(II) says if there was a prior failed informal adjustment, then the case is not eligible to be returned for an informal adjustment.

Likewise, our sacred texts in the Talmudic says *our children are our guarantors*. Our sacred text tells us in the Torah that, *“Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children”* (Proverbs 17:6). Our sacred text from the words of Jesus the Christ says, *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven”* (Matthew 18:10).

In summary, if I were to rephrase words from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the triplets of evil, I would say, *“Now there is nothing new about why we should protect the most*

*vulnerable, our children. What is new are the resources, skills, and techniques to protect them. Thus, the question is whether our state or nation has the will.*¹

Therefore, we urge you to vote in favor of HB1187. Our children need counseling and care, not cage.

Sincerely,

Marlon Tilghman

Rev. Marlon B. Tilghman,
Co-Chair of BRIDGE Maryland, Inc., Criminal Justice and Education Workgroup

¹ King Jr., Martin Luther, "Martin Luther King, Jr. Saw Three Evils in the World | Racism was only the First," The Atlantic, May 10, 1967, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/martin-luther-king-hungry-club-forum/552533/>