



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

Testimony submitted to House Judiciary Committee

March 24, 2021

**SB222 - Juveniles Charged as Adults – Study and Confinement
Support**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, Supports SB222 Juveniles Charged as Adults – Study and Confinement. Youth Service Bureaus provide prevention, intervention and treatment services to youth and their families. SB222 will ensure that youth charged as an adult are held within a secure juvenile facility and that their transfer hearings occur within a timely fashion. This Bill ensures that Maryland is in line the Federal Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (JJRA) prohibiting a child from having sight or sound contact with adult inmates while the child is awaiting trial. MAYSB believes this bill supports the State's efforts to have a juvenile justice system that is developmentally informed and urges a favorable finding.

The federal JJRA requires that youth be kept sight and sound separated at all times from adult offenders as well as their removal from all adult jails and lockups. Research has shown that young people held in adult facilities were sexually assaulted five times more often than youth in juvenile facilities, assaulted by staff twice as often, and assaulted with a weapon 50 percent more often. SB222 will ensure that all youth will be held in secure juvenile facilities and reduce their risk of being assaulted while in custody.

The JJRA also requires that States participating in the Title II Formula Grants Program address juvenile delinquency prevention efforts and system improvement efforts designed to reduce the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups, who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Data in Maryland shows that youth of color are disparately impacted at each decision point in the juvenile justice system.

Adolescent brain research findings show that brains are not fully developed until people reach their mid-twenties. The last portion to fully mature is the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain, where the processes of thought and memory are based. This supports the foundation of the juvenile justice system highlighting the need for youth to be treated differently from adults when they come into contact with the system. SB 222 will bring Maryland in compliance with the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018.

We respectfully ask you to Support this bill.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Park, PhD
MAYSB Chair
lpark@greenbeltmd.gov

1 Somerville LH, Casey BJ. Developmental Neurobiology of Cognitive Control and Motivational Systems. Sackler Institute for Developmental Psychobiology, Weill Cornell Medical College, NY, USA.

2 Dale Parent et al, Conditions Of Confinement: Juvenile Detention and Corrections Facilities Research Summary, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention