

February 4, 2021

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

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I live in Bethesda, in District 16. I offer my written testimony in favor of HB315/SB136, Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act.

My background and training is in child and adolescent mental health issues, and I have a Ph.D. from Stanford University. I've headed a department of child and adolescent mental health, served on commissions and committees addressing the needs of juvenile offenders, and given expert testimony in juvenile courts. I can state unequivocally that children and youth do not think in the same way as adults.

Children and youth are protected groups in society because they do not have the reasoning skills or behavioral controls that come with adulthood. As research shows definitively, their vulnerabilities are worse if they live in poverty, are exposed to violence, have learning disabilities, and/or are members of historically marginalized communities. Studies also show that Black children are routinely viewed as somehow more "mature" at a young age than white children, putting them at even greater risk of harsh treatment when interacting with the justice system. Children and youth are far more likely to give false confessions, to not understand the consequences of their statements, and to conform to what the pressure of the moment is. Therefore, it is critical that we provide added protection for minors being interrogated by law enforcement.

Children and youth whose freedom -- whose ability to live with family and in their communities -- is at risk whenever they are questioned by law enforcement, must have legal counsel before being questioned and their parents must be notified that they are being questioned. This is the

standard in many countries. This is the standard supported by every major advocacy group for children, including the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association.

Right now, Maryland maintains that children as young as seven-years-old can be held to answer in Juvenile Court for their action, and this state has a higher percentage of youth in the juvenile justice system than almost any other state in the U.S. The school to prison pipeline must stop. Adequate legal protection for juveniles being interrogated by police is one important step in that direction.

**I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB315/SB136.**