

February 4, 2021



THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

Carol Stern

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**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:** Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern. I live in Chevy Chase, in state district 16. I am providing testimony in favor of SB136/HB315, Juvenile Law - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act. I provide this testimony as a mother and grandmother, and as co-chair of the Justice System Reform and Immigrant Rights Team of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes the Jewish community to fight for racial, economic, and social justice in Maryland and DC and engages more than 5,500 people across the state.

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." The Jewish sages explain that the word tzedek is repeated not only for emphasis but to teach us that in our pursuit of justice, our means must be as just as our ends. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan wrote "teach us to respect the integrity of every human soul be it that of a friend or stranger, child or adult." When we are working to reform our criminal justice system, we must demand that it operates in accordance with these deeply held Jewish beliefs.

As a mother of two children and a grandmother of three, I cannot imagine allowing my children or grandchildren to be interrogated by police without prior legal consultation and parental/guardian notification. This lack of justice should no longer be allowed in our state. A juvenile may not understand their rights or the warnings given to them. Many may not have the education, experience, background and capacity to even know that they can stay silent, ask for an attorney or call their parents. HB315/SB136 adds much needed reforms for treating minors in the justice system with equality and the respect that all people deserve.

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