



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

Testimony submitted to House Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2021

**House Bill 169 – Juvenile Law – Informal Adjustment
Support**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus, which represents a statewide network of bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, **Supports** House Bill 169 – Juvenile Law – Informal Adjustment. HB 169 will allow the court to waive a youth back to the Department of Juvenile Services for an informal adjustment.

Youth Service Bureaus work with youth involved in the juvenile justice system and know that lessening a youth's contact with courts is in line with the Developmental Model of Juvenile Justice, a model Maryland has been following for several years. In the Developmental Model, fairness is considered and, thus, sanctions should be proportionate in severity to the harm caused by the offense and the culpability of the offender. Youthful offenders are sometimes moved forward to the courts before all information about a case, including the youth's degree of involvement, is understood. This bill would give discretion to a court to waive a child back to DJS for an informal adjustment. This ensures that the level of court involvement is in line with the severity of the offense and the culpability of the youth.

This bill will also assist in the State of Maryland's efforts to address the disproportionate number of minority youth 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. This bill will help create a fairer system for youth of color, as their progression through the system can be halted and reversed as appropriate. This will ensure that all youth are not inappropriately pushed further into the juvenile justice system.

We respectfully ask you to **Support** this bill.

Respectfully Submitted:

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