

Hello,

I am writing to express my support of the Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act, SB53. This bill, at its core, is about protecting childrens' due process rights. As obvious as it may sound, all youth in Maryland must be guaranteed access to legal representation before they are questioned by police, and yet our state which loves to tout its progressive bonafides, does not guarantee that. In a state that at, at 70% "leads" the nation in the worst way possible in the share of the prison population that is African American, this lack of legal representation contributes to the criminalization and incarceration of black and brown youth who are disproportionately targeted by our justice system.

While it by no means solves this problem on its own, nor could any legislation,, this law would require that police attempt to contact a child's parents, and require that the child be given the opportunity to speak to a lawyer prior to police interrogation. Frankly, I was shocked and disturbed to learn that this was not already the law in Maryland. It's shameful that it isn't already, and the state must rectify this as soon as possible during the legislative session so as to avoid a potential governor's veto that cannot be overridden after session.

Thank you for your time, and please do the right thing.

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