



TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Jill P. Carter

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
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DATE: March 3, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 691 – *Juvenile Justice Reform*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 691.

Senate Bill 691 reflects a number of the recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Reform Council, which as this Committee is aware, was a bi-partisan Council created by the General Assembly to do a comprehensive review of the Juvenile Justice System in order to identify best practices and recommended actions to limit and/or mitigate the incidence and impact of juvenile involvement within the criminal justice system. The initiatives and system reform reflected in this legislation will move Maryland closer to bringing the juvenile justice system framework in line with the developing and adolescent brain.

Senate Bill 691 raises the minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction to age 13; places developmentally appropriate time limits on probation; enhances access to diversion programs so that youth may receive more restorative measures; and bans child incarceration for low-level offenses.

Enactment of Senate Bill 691 recognizes the trauma imposed on young children who intersect with the juvenile justice system. It also provides acknowledgement of the stages of brain development that may lead to poor decision making by youth that are best addressed through treatment and intervention, not incarceration. The reforms will also result in decreasing family separation and childhood trauma. MDAAP strongly urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

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