

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am a resident of District 21. I am testifying in **support of HB0269 - Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act**.

House Bill 0269 will require a law enforcement officer to contact a parent/guardian with reasonable notice and provide consultation with an attorney for any child they plan to interrogate. I request that you support this legislation to protect children from the manipulation and fear they can experience during a police interrogation.

Both the United States and Maryland Constitution provide the right to be free from self-incrimination and the right to effective assistance of legal counsel. Although these rights are important for adults, they are even more important for minors. Police interrogations may even begin at school, as in the case of *J.D.B. v. North Carolina*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the often coercive school environment should be a factor weighed in giving juveniles their Miranda rights. At school, students are not free to disobey orders nor are they free to leave without consequence. (<https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/10pdf/09-11121.pdf>)

Whether at school or at a police station, juveniles are often under the added pressure to please adult authority figures, and may not understand the motivations a law enforcement official may have for misleading or intimidating them. Minors may also not understand the long-term implications of agreeing to something an adult authority figure may pressure them to say, which in the case of interrogation by law enforcement can have life-long negative repercussions. These concerns were recognized by the legal community in *Miller v. Alabama*, 132 S. Ct. 2455 (2012), the United States Supreme Court, which stated that minors had “diminished capacity” and were not able to fully understand the risks and consequences of their actions.

In fact, according to the Juvenile Law Center, “Adolescents waive their Miranda rights at an astounding rate of 90% and make false confessions at exponentially higher rates than adults.” (<https://jlc.org/issues/youth-interrogations>)

A well-known historical example of children testifying without the presence of their parents or without legal counsel is the Central Park Five. In this case, police used intimidation to coerce a group of minors into guilty pleas, even though no evidence for the guilt of the minors existed. As a result, five young Black men were imprisoned for years, only to have their convictions vacated years later. This is a situation that could easily be replayed in Maryland due to our current gap in ensuring minors are

provided with the legal support they are supposed to be guaranteed.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0269**. Please help to ensure children get the help they need before being interrogated by police.

I appreciate your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Linda K. Girdner  
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