



**Maryland Defenders Union**  
**Local 423, AFSCME Council 3**  
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February 8, 2022

**RE: FAVORABLE, HB 459**

Chair Luke Clippinger  
Judiciary Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Defenders Union writes in strong support of HB 459. As core staff, social workers and attorneys at the Office of the Public Defender, we work directly with children in the juvenile court system and understand why these changes are necessary. The bipartisan Juvenile Justice Reform Council involved key stakeholders, analyzed research from experts and listened to community members across the state to develop their recommendations.

This bill would raise the minimum age of children charged in Court, add time limits to the probationary period for children, promote more restorative justice and other diversionary programs and ban incarceration for children for some minor charges. All of these changes would benefit both the children involved and public safety.

Again, I ask you for your support for this important bill to promote justice in our state. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marci Tarrant Johnson  
President, Maryland Defenders Union