

02/10/2022

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21702

**TESTIMONY ON HB#/459 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Juvenile Justice Reform**

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and member of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3B. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/459, Juvenile Justice Reform.**

I wish to thank Delegate Klippinger for sponsoring this vital legislation. I am a member of progressive organizations such as Progressive Maryland and Our Revolution Western Maryland. I want to tell you why I find this bill and the actions it would take to be both necessary and required.

Children are not “miniature adults”. Yet, despite medical and psychological evidence that the ability to process the world and the restrictions of living in society are not being fully formed before reaching adulthood our criminal justice system asks us to treat minors accused of crimes as if they had been adults when the crimes occurred.

The imposition of adult charges for minors in Maryland has also been found to disproportionately affect minorities. A study by the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research, “Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Maryland Juvenile Justice System”, demonstrates that the reasons for charging minors as adults likely has a racial injustice component. It appears that this methodology of dealing with youth criminal activity was based on racial animus that considered all members of minority races, regardless of age, as criminals who needed to be tightly controlled.

It is past time that we return our justice system to fairness and to a goal of dealing with individuals on an age appropriate basis. We must stop treating our youth as adults in our criminal justice system. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/459.**