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**TESTIMONY ON HB459 - FAVORABLE**  
**Juvenile Justice Reform**

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

**FROM:** Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern. I live in Chevy Chase, in state district 16 and I am a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation. I am providing testimony in favor of SB459, Juvenile Justice Reform. I also provide this testimony as a mother and grandmother.

The Jewish text that shapes my religious and moral conviction that juveniles must be treated as children and not adults is the directive issued in Deuteronomy 16:20, **“Tzedek, tzedek tirdof - Justice, justice shall you pursue.”** The Jewish sages explain that the word tzedek is repeated not only for emphasis but to teach us that in our pursuit of justice, our means must be as just as our ends. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan wrote **“teach us to respect the integrity of every human soul be it that of a friend or stranger, child or adult.”** When we are working to reform our criminal justice system, we must demand that it operates in accordance with these deeply held Jewish beliefs.

The key provisions in this bill that will create real juvenile justice reform are: 1)raising the minimum age for children to be subject to court jurisdiction, 2)placing developmentally appropriate time limitations on probation, 3)removing barriers to diversion so that courts may allow for more restorative measures, and 4)banning child incarceration for low-level offenses.

As a mother of two children and a grandmother of three, I cannot imagine allowing my children or grandchildren to be treated as an adult by the police, in detention or in any court proceeding. **This lack of justice should no longer be allowed in our state. A child must be treated as a child.**

Without the reforms in this important bill, the criminalization and incarceration of black and brown youth, who are disproportionately targeted by our justice system, will continue. **HB0459 adds much needed reforms for treating children in the justice system with equality and the respect that all people deserve.**

**I ask the Committee for a favorable report on HB459.**