



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB15 Juvenile Law – Child in Need of Supervision
Mandatory Petition
(NyKayla Strawder Memorial Act)**

**Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On February 8, 2023**

SB15 mandates that an intake officer file a petition for a Child in Need of Supervision (SINS) if a child under the age of ten (10) commits an act resulting in the death of a victim.

Last session, this body adopted the recommendations of the bipartisan Juvenile Justice Reform Council. Together, we passed the most transformative juvenile justice bill in recent memory, declaring that children are children. One of the most significant pieces of that legislation was a provision prohibiting criminally charging children under the age of ten (10), aligning Maryland with best childhood development practices.

In August 2022, a 9-year-old child shot and killed 15-year-old NyKayla Strawder at her home in Baltimore City. When her family realized that the child who caused the death of their beloved daughter would not be prosecuted or detained, they approached me seeking justice.

SB15 is the product of many months of discussions and fact-finding to answer two (2) fundamental questions: What is the appropriate action to take in such tragic situations? How do we prevent similar tragedies from happening again and ensure that the proper resources are in place to correct such unacceptable behavior?

The consensus was to refer the child to the Department of Juvenile Services through a CINS petition. The CINS program provides children and their families with the necessary support, such as new housing, educational, and mental health programs and services.

Most children are not predisposed to harm others; but rather, the unfortunate product of the environment in which they live (i.e., poor housing, poverty, crime ridden neighborhoods, violence, lack of adequate education, easy access to weapons, parents addicted to alcohol and/or drugs, being left to provide for themselves, etc.), and the failure of their basic needs being addressed.

The wrap-around services and programs provided by the Department of Juvenile Services through a CINS petition address all of these issues with the aim of, among other things, correcting inappropriate behavior and preventing and/or deterring future criminal like acts.

I respectfully request that the Committee grant a favorable report on SB15.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter, Esq.