

Date of Hearing: 3/2/2023

Andrew J. Miller

16 Emerald Ridge Court, Baltimore, MD 21209

TESTIMONY ON HB0096
POSITION: FAVORABLE
Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction
(Youth Equity and Safety Act)

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

FROM: Andrew J. Miller

My name is Andrew Miller. I am a resident of District 11. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0096, The Youth Equity and Safety Act.

I am a member of Chizuk Amuno Congregation, a large Conservative synagogue in Stevenson, MD, and I am a past president of the congregation. For me it is a religious obligation, rooted in sacred Jewish texts and teachings, to speak out in opposition to injustice in our community and in our state, and to support measures to remedy injustice. Last February I submitted testimony on behalf of the Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act and was glad to see it passed into law. This year I hope we will make further progress with the Youth Equity Safety Act. As was the case last year, this is a prime example of a bill that will help to remedy unjust and racially-biased practices affecting juveniles in Maryland.

For those of us who think of Maryland as a progressive state, it is shocking to realize that Maryland sends more young people per capita to adult court based on the type of offense than any other state than Alabama. Maryland also sent more kids to adult court in 2021 than California, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Arizona combined, **a per capita rate more than 10 times higher**. Furthermore 81% of young people charged in adult court in Maryland are Black, and Black youth are more likely to be sent to adult prison and receive longer sentences than their white counterparts for similar offenses.

The existing automatic charging requirement pushes children as young as 14 into the adult system for 33 different offenses. Treatment of juveniles as adults exposes them to more physical violence, sexual violence, and isolation; reduces access to rehabilitation services; and increases the risk of future violent crime and recidivism. The YES Act does NOT release teens charged with serious crimes back into the community and it does not prevent prosecutors from seeking to move cases to adult court. It DOES establish that all youth under age 18 begin their cases in juvenile court and that decisions about changing venue are determined by a Judge.

The YES Act will help bring Maryland's policies closer to those of 26 other states that have passed laws limiting the pathways into adult courts. Otherwise we are continuing to endorse a system of unequal justice before the law. Therefore **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0096.**