



TESTIMONY FOR HB0814 Juvenile Law - Reform

Bill Sponsor: Speaker

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0814 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

There have been many attempts at updating the juvenile laws in Maryland. It is a fraught issue as no one wants to harm children, but those children who have caused harm to others must be punished. This bill, if enacted, would change the law related to charging of minors, specifically those under the age of 10, to include crimes involving firearms, sexual offenses in the third degree, and charges of motor vehicle theft. These are crimes that are being committed more and more by children, especially those involving firearms due to the proliferation of weapons in our society.

Other aspects of change included in this bill include strengthening the communication process between the intake officer and the State's Attorney and the Department of Juvenile Services, and nominating additional members to the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices.

Our members understand and appreciate that it is very hard to ensure that our laws protect the public, especially children, but also take into account that there are children who commit acts which cause harm to others.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.