



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William Smith Jr., Chair and
Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 9, 2024

RE: **SB 744 – Juvenile Law - Reform**

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 744 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill makes several changes to the state's juvenile justice system to address juvenile crime, and improve accountability and services offered to youth.

Juvenile crime is a topic of serious concern both to residents and law enforcement. During community meetings, officers routinely hear that crime committed by juveniles tops their list of concerns. Residents regularly express their frustration about a perceived lack of accountability among juvenile offenders. Many of our residents have expressed that they live in fear of getting gas or shopping in the community. There is a growing consensus, not just by law enforcement, but also within the community at large, that there are no consequences for juveniles accused of criminal activity, and that even when they are adjudicated as having participated in a crime, they are not held accountable for their actions. SB 744 implements several changes to address these concerns.

SB 744 expands the crimes to be considered in adult court for juveniles 13 and older to include crimes involving weapons, firearms, animals, sexual offenses, and car jackings; makes several changes to streamline the DJS filing process and create greater accountability within the system; authorizes the State's Attorney's Office to review cases in certain circumstances; and increases the length of probationary periods to provide sufficient for services. The bill also eliminates the State Advisory Board for Juvenile Services and reimagines the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices to bring parties together to review all aspects of the juvenile justice system and make recommendations for improvements. MCPA and MSA support these efforts as they will enable more timely assessments and interventions for youthful offenders, reduce repeat offending, offer youth the services needed, and provide a process for improvement.

532 Baltimore Boulevard, Suite 308
Westminster, Maryland 21157
667-314-3216 / 667-314-3236

MCPA and MSA is concerned with the language on page 8, lines 26-30, that requires law enforcement to complete and forward a written complaint or citation to the Department of Juvenile Services for processing if a child is taken into custody pursuant to the law of arrest. Law enforcement agencies across the state offer positive, supportive and effective programs and services for youth that divert offenders from the juvenile justice system and instead provide mentoring, counseling, and restorative justice. Youth are diverted to these programs prior to a complaint or citation being filed with DJS. Once the filing takes place, youth can no longer be diverted into these programs. MCPA and MSA request the opportunity to work the Committee and other parties to develop amendments to address this concern.

Lastly, MCPA and MSA only have one representative on the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices. MCPA and MSA respectfully requests both organizations serve on the Commission to ensure the views of smaller and larger law enforcement agencies are represented.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 744 WITH AMENDMENTS** and respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report as **AMENDED**.