

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a resident of District 8. I am testifying in opposition to SB0744, Juvenile Law – Reform.

This bill is not right for Maryland. Children are not adults – their reasoning, analytic skills, and impulse control are developing as they age. Some Maryland leaders and media outlets are stoking fears about children, using age-old stereotypes about dangerous and violent youth. This bill undermines several important parts of the Juvenile Justice Restoration Act and ignores over 20 years of research and data on the most effective ways to hold kids accountable and improve safety.

This legislation will make us less safe by punishing children who need support while overlooking important updates that could be made to our state’s law enforcement and juvenile justice systems. This legislation will see thousands more children incarcerated every year, particularly Black and brown children, exacerbating already serious racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Instead of SB0744, we should be investing in programming and services that are proven to change behavior. We should be increasing support for the state and local *systems* that interact with youth, including youth charged with crimes.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in opposition to** SB0744. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

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