

February 8, 2024

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TESTIMONY ON HB0814 - POSITION: (UNFAVORABLE)
Juvenile Law - Reform

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

FROM: Mara Greengrass

My name is Mara Greengrass. I am a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony against HB0814, Juvenile Law - Reform.

Among other things, I'm a mother of two children, one at Northwood High School and one at UMBC. Over the last 19 years, I've watched my children and their neighborhood peers navigate a complicated and changing world with more grace than I think I would have managed in their shoes. It's just plain hard to be a kid, more now than ever.

Which is why I am severely disappointed that this esteemed body would seek to undermine the advances of the Juvenile Justice Restoration Act, using fear of *children* as a political motivation. 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.

Although the intent of some provisions of this bill may be to hold the system accountable, what it would do in practice is place unfair burdens on children. For example, it's ridiculous to punish a child who misses more than two sessions of a treatment program, when most children have little control over transportation and attendance.

HB0814 would punish the children who most need our help and support. It would push children into detention more often and with greater speed. It would make it less likely that children would receive the services they need—services that might alter the course of their life away from the crime they're accused of.

My Jewish values call me to embrace both justice and mercy, but neither justice nor mercy are served by forcing more Black and brown children into the legal system with less oversight from the adults most knowledgeable about juvenile justice. **I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB0814.**