

2/08/2024

Rabbi Daniel Cotzin Burg  
Baltimore, Maryland



**TESTIMONY ON HB814/SB744 - UNFAVORABLE**  
**Juvenile Justice - Reform**

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

**FROM:** Rabbi Daniel Cotzin Burg

**My name is Rabbi Daniel Burg. I am a resident of District 40. I am submitting this testimony opposing HB814/SB744, Juvenile Justice - Reform, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ).** JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies from across the state in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

The Hebrew prophets predict that in better times, "Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your old shall dream dreams and your youth shall see visions" (Joel 3:1). Young people's lives are filled with vision and possibility. Children need patience and understanding to grow through mistakes and, research shows, for their brains to fully develop. Our children deserve their childhood. A better future for our state demands we do better for our children. HB814/SB744 does not do better for our children.

When the leadership unveiled HB814/SB744, Senate President Bill Ferguson said that, "While youth offenders account for less than 10% of the crimes committed, unfortunately, it is clear that they become the largest part of the crime perception challenge in Maryland." Which to my mind begs a question: if the problem is crime perception, if the problem is how we think about our youth, wouldn't courageous leadership in this moment challenge these false assumptions, to help Maryland residents change their perceptions to match reality?

Instead, HB814/SB744 doubles down on failed policies by criminalizing children as young as ten years old. It rolls back key provisions of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, undoing hard-won progress made by the General Assembly. There are ways to help make our community safer, but we know from 20 years of research and experience that the reactionary policies in HB814/SB744 are not the solution. **I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB814/SB744.**