

Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

HB 814 - Juvenile Law - Reform

Unfavorable

Hello Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Bartlett, and committee members,

We write to you to express our unwavering opposition to House Bill 185 (HB 185), on behalf of the Prince George's County Police Accountability Coalition. We are a grassroots coalition of directly impacted Maryland residents, police accountability organizations, and economic justice community groups.

The passage of HB 814 would take away key provisions of the Juvenile Justice Reform and Child Interrogation Protection Acts, which ensured children are not just aware of their rights but can exercise them confidently and created wraparound services that provide programs to prevent kids from committing crimes and reduce recidivism rates.

In Maryland, our children are our most precious and vulnerable population, as young as ten years old they can be ensnared by the legal system, which can have devastating effects on their development. In order to systematically address public safety we must focus on policies that work such as; improving schools, expanding affordable housing, bolstering treatment for mental health and drug addiction, creating well-paying jobs, and more. The General Assembly should also take measures to increase the use of the Child in Need of Supervision (CINS) system. After twenty years of research, the data has shown that age-appropriate support systems and services are more effective at keeping kids out of trouble and without prioritizing incarceration.

Maryland cannot continue to prioritize incarcerating children when the data has shown, this does not reduce crime, it in fact has lasting consequences such as; delaying the child's psychological maturity, increasing trauma, exposing them to physical, emotional, and mental violence, and other horrific experiences. For these reasons and more our coalition urges this committee to oppose HB 814 and take immediate action to strengthen and pass legislation to support Maryland kids everywhere.

Respectfully,

Just Us Initiative

Concerned Citizens for Bail Reform
Families United For Justice Network
Baltimore Algebra Project
Schools Not Jails