

HB0814\_Ann Rubin\_UNFAV

Feb. 8, 2024

Anna Rubin

Columbia, MD 21045

TESTIMONY ON HB0814 - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

Juvenile Law - Reform

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

FROM: Dr. Anna Rubin

My name is Anna Rubin. I am a resident of District 13. I am submitting this testimony against HB0814, Juvenile Law-Reform. I am a member of Columbia Jewish Congregation and act as the co-chair of its Social Action Committee and a member of the CJC Standing for Racial Justice Committee. I am also co-chair of the Indivisible Howard County Immigration Action Team.

I am opposed to HB0814 because the proposed changes do not enhance community safety. This bill undermines several important provisions 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. Instead of investing in programming and services that are proven to change behavior, this legislation will make us less safe by punishing children who need support and giving a pass to our state's dysfunctional law enforcement and juvenile justice systems.

I am so grateful my own adopted Latino son has been spared from any experience with detention. When he was 12, he was involved with starting a small fire in our area. But his case was diverted to his doing community service and counseling. That this method was effective is proven by his having had no further incidents in the ensuing 20 years.

Jewish tradition focuses a great deal on nurturing, educating and caring for children. We are taught that the Divine encompasses both justice and mercy, but some prosecutors and lawmakers scapegoat Black children rather than nurture them as the divine beings we know all children are.

I am very concerned that the proposed changes steamroll intake, may lead to overcharging, and prevent law enforcement from referring a kid for immediate services including local care teams, youth service bureaus, prevention services and law enforcement-based diversion programs. Neither does it. It doesn't allocate more funds for support for youth.

I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB#0814.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anna Rubin