

March 26, 2024

Jeffrey S. Rubin  
Potomac, MD 20854

**TESTIMONY ON SB744 - UNFAVORABLE**  
**Juvenile Law - Reform**

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

**FROM:** Jeffrey S. Rubin

My name is Jeffrey S. Rubin and I am a resident of District 15, in Potomac. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB744, Juvenile Law - Reform.

Maryland has a regrettable legacy of being among the worst states in our nation when it comes to treating children in the criminal legal system. In 2022, steps were taken to reduce the use of overly punitive measures and adopt practices based on data, research, and the study of human development. SB744 would have us return to discredited policies with flawed rationales.

Rather than making better use of social services, and despite some amendments that would mitigate the worst aspects of the original bill, the provisions of SB744 would lead to the incarceration of more children. The tough on crime theme has again become popular among some law enforcement officials, in spite of the evidence strongly indicating that community services and protective measures are more effective ways to change behavior. Contrary to the reasoning behind this legislation, policies that promote detention and prolonged probation of youth will increase the likelihood of their eventual incarceration and subsequent recidivism, which would decrease public safety.

I support the portion of SB744 that describes the creation of a Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices. This body should be tasked with reviewing the remaining provisions in the current bill, as well as the data pertaining to other approaches to juvenile justice. This should be followed by a set of recommendations for future legislation and related policy reforms.

As it stands, SB744 is likely to result in an increase in the use of detention facilities, a costly, counterproductive approach that fails to address the underlying causes of behavioral problems. More attention should be devoted to dealing with the root causes of problematic behavior, and best practices in caring for youth on an individual basis. Resorting to more punishment is not the way to bring about greater public safety.

**I respectfully urge this committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB744.**