



VISION - *BRIDGE Maryland sees the state challenged by a history of inequity but engaged in community organizing for a more just tomorrow.*

MISSION - *BRIDGE Maryland uses intentional relationship building, organizing, and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world.*

HB 169

**CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION OF MINORS - ADMISSIBILITY OF STATEMENTS  
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

**BRIDGE Maryland, Inc. supports HB169 as written, and asks for a favorable report.** BRIDGE Maryland, Inc. is an interfaith organization with laity and religious leaders who identify and address community issues by building power to pursue equity and opportunity for all Marylanders. We support HB 169 because minors who encounter the legal system must be treated differently than adults. This is because brain science tells us that children's brains are not fully developed, and therefore they are more vulnerable to deceptive police tactics. During custodial interrogation, young people are especially likely to feel fear and take actions they believe will satisfy law enforcement and lead to their release.

Likewise, when examining the research, it becomes clear that when subject to interrogation and deceptive tactics, children are likely to falsely confess. For instance, "Coercive and deceptive interrogation methods, coupled with the recognized vulnerabilities and susceptibilities of children as a group, has led to an unacceptably high rate of false confessions among juvenile suspects."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, according to the National Registry of Exonerations 36% of exonerees who were wrongly convicted as children falsely confessed.<sup>2</sup> That number is even higher when considering 14- and 15-year-olds (57%) and children under 14 (86%).<sup>3</sup>

Just two years ago I sat in a hearing on the Child Interrogation Protection LAW and the

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<sup>1</sup> "Five Facts about Police Deception and Youth You Should Know" by Nigel Quiroz, The Innocence Project:

<https://innocenceproject.org/police-deception-lying-interrogations-youth-teenagers/>

<sup>2</sup> "Age and Mental Status of Exonerated Defendants Who Confessed" 3/17/2020, National Registry of Exonerations, <https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Documents/Age%20and%20Mental%20Status%20of%20Exonerated%20Defendants%20Who%20Falsely%20Confess%20Table.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

prosecutor was asked, "Can law enforcement officers lie to kids?" Reluctantly the prosecutor said, "I think so." We all know the answer is yes. Yet, we tell our children that they are not to lie yet we're giving law enforcement the right to do so in the interest of justice. However, what prevents telling the truth to achieve that same justice? I believe that is the intent of this bill. To uphold what we tell our children to do by emulating it in every situation and particularly in the legal system that can determine their freedom and potentially their quality of life should they be found guilty of a crime that they did not commit or participate in.

Thus, **it is for these reasons that we strongly encourage this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 169** to ensure our child learns to be truthful in all avenues of life. Thank you for your favorable report.

Respectfully,

*Marlon Tilghman*

Rev. Dr. Marlon Tilghman  
Criminal Justice Task Force, Co-Chair  
BRIDGE Maryland, Inc.  
Parent, Grandparent, Mentor, Pastor