

February 7, 2024

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TESTIMONY ON SB0744/HB0814 - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
Juvenile Justice - Reform

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

FROM: Steven G. Asin

My name is Steven G. Asin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB0744/HB0814, Juvenile Justice Reform

I am a 73-year-old attorney whose career and retirement have been devoted to providing representation to persons charged with or convicted of crimes who cannot afford to retain a lawyer to represent them. My experience has shown me that real and lasting criminal justice reform requires a change in the way criminal legal system actors view the individuals whose fates they determine. They need to see them as more than the worst thing they have ever done, and as fully human as their own sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, and close friends and relatives. This is especially true when it comes to responding to children who commit acts that, if perpetrated by adults, would be criminal.

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 provide accountability and improve safety while changing the negative life trajectory of the children whose conduct has compelled the intervention of law enforcement. 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. This legislation will see thousands more children incarcerated every year, particularly Black and brown children, exacerbating already serious racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

I respectfully urge this committee to return an UNFAVORABLE report on SB0134/HB0297.