

February 4, 2025

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TESTIMONY ON SB422 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Mara Greengrass

My name is Mara Greengrass and I'm a resident of District 18. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB422, Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction *with amendments*.

I'm a 25-year resident of Montgomery County, member of Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, and a nearly lifelong Marylander. I appeal to your sense of compassion and fairness to support this bill with an amendment to end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger.

I was deeply unhappy to learn a few years ago that the only state that sends more kids to adult court per capita than Maryland is *Alabama*. That's a disgrace. Even more of a disgrace: More than three-quarters of the kids sent to adult court are Black.

According to Jewish tradition, we are all *b'tzelem elohim*, made in the image of God, but there is a special duty and obligation to care for children. I believe this obligation includes treating children like children by default rather than assuming that an accusation of involvement in certain crimes turns them into adults.

I'm the mother of two kids, one who just turned 20 and one who will turn 16 in a few weeks, and let me tell you...if you've spent any time with kids and teens, you know their brains aren't fully formed. All the science will tell you that too, but it's just common-sense if you've ever had to argue with a teenager about why they have to brush their teeth *every* night.

In addition to the scientific and moral arguments against automatically charging kids as adults, sending kids to adult court only to have them sent back to juvenile court (which happens almost 90% of the time) is a waste of money, which is ridiculous in a tight budget year like 2025.

Please end the automatic charging of kids as adults for all offenses. Let the judge familiar with the case make the decision, rather than making it for them. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a report of favorable with amendments on SB422.**