

SB0422_AnnaRubin_FWA

Jan. 31, 2025

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction

Dr. Anna Rubin

Columbia, MD 21045

**TESTIMONY - Favorable with Amendments of Senate Bill 0422:
Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction**

TO: Chair Senator Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Dr. Anna Rubin

DATE: Friday, January 31, 2025

I want to thank Sen. Will Smith for sponsoring this bill. I urge the committee to issue a favorable with amendments report on this bill. I am writing as a private citizen and as a member of the Columbia Jewish Congregation (chair of Social Justice Committee and former board member) as well as civic organizations.

The Torah commands us to pursue justice, and our sages instruct us that the methods we use to do so must be just themselves. The practice of automatically charging youths as adults in Maryland is unjust, ineffective and disproportionately targets Black and brown youth. SB0422 is a step forward by reforming the racist practice of autocharge. While this legislation seeks to address components of our state's unacceptable system of automatically charging kids as adults, it does not go far enough and should be amended to end this practice entirely. Ending automatic charging for all children leads to better community safety, and better long term outcomes for the children who are brought into the legal system.

80% of the kids tried and held in the adult court and prison system are Black. 87% of kids held in adult court and prison system end up being either released or returned to Juvenile jurisdiction. Ending this practice would reduce not only violent crime, but also the criminalization and incarceration of Black youth, who are disproportionately targeted by our justice system. It would also produce significant savings which could be applied to the chronically underfunded Juvenile Services Department.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Anna Rubin (Emerita, UMBC) 21045