

Date of Hearing: 2/4/25

Barbara Schaffer
Rockville, MD 20850

TESTIMONY ON SB422 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
JUVENILE COURT-JURISDICTION

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

FROM: Barbara Schaffer

My name is Barbara Schaffer. I am a resident of District 17. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of SB422, Juvenile Court-Jurisdiction.

I am a parent of two children, a former teacher, a member of Chabad Potomac, and a concerned citizen of Maryland. I am in support of SB422 with amendments because I believe the practice of automatically charging children as young as 14 is harmful to their physical and mental well-being. Sending children to adult detention facilities with fewer resources and less access to education than in the juvenile system leads to significantly higher recidivism, as well as increased isolation and physical and sexual violence.

Another concern I have is racial equality, 81% of children charged in adult court in Maryland are Black. We need to end the criminalization and incarceration of Black youth, who are disproportionately targeted by our legal system. Maryland sends more young people to adult court than any other state per capita except for Alabama. It is time for us to join the 26 other states who have passed laws to treat children like children and limit their ending up in adult courts.

SB422, is a good start, but it does not go far enough. I am requesting amendments that would end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger. The amendments change where juvenile cases start, and would still allow cases to be waived up to adult court after judicial review.

This is what I would want for my own children and my values are such that I want justice and fair treatment for all of Maryland's children. I respectfully urge the committee to consider how they would want their children or family members' children to be treated and pass SB422 with amendments. Thank you.

Yours truly,
Barbara Schaffer