



Life Change AME Church

www.lifechangeame.com

**Senate Bill 422
Chairman; Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2025 1 p.m.
Life Change AME Church**

Dear Chairman Will Smith and Members of the Committee,

I Rev Regina Clay and I am the Pastor of Life Change AME Church in Columbia, MD. I am writing to express my strong support for SB-422. The policy of trying, convicting, and sentencing children as adults is fundamentally flawed and has had devastating effects on many families, particularly within African American communities. It is time for Maryland to correct this injustice.

The punitive mindset that promotes the notion of “adult crime, adult time” has led to serious consequences, most notably the loss of judicial discretion. This law has become a blunt instrument that disregards the unique circumstances of youth. Many states have recognized the harms of this practice and successfully rescinded it out of compassion for the individuals and families affected. It is time for Maryland to follow suit.

While we acknowledge the necessity of accountability for young people, we must also recognize that many lack positive influences and resources. Compassion should guide us in allowing judges the discretion to determine the appropriate venue for young offenders, whether juvenile or adult court, on a case-by-case basis.

I urge you to support SB-422 to end the harmful practice of charging children as adults in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration.

info@lifechangeame.org

Office: (410) 480-7142