



January 31, 2025

Dear Chairman Smith, Jr., Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Quaker Voice of Maryland is submitting this testimony - SB0422 - Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction: FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS

Quakers believe that all people can change and have historically been active in criminal justice system reform work to ensure that people who enter the system are provided with the appropriate rehabilitative services so they can return to our communities as successful members. This bill stands out to our members as important legislation because it would protect our youth who are entering the justice system. Ending automatic charging for children leads to improved community safety and better long term outcomes for children that enter the criminal justice system.

There are many reasons this legislation can lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities, but I will highlight two in this piece of testimony: (1) Youth who are charged in adult court may be less likely to have access to rehabilitative services that are appropriate for their needs, which can lead to reoffending in the future, and (2) Youth who are charged as adults are at an increased risk of sexual assault, physical harm, and being placed in solitary confinement as a protection mechanism. To be clear, this bill does not mean youth cases can never reach adult court, but it does change the way youth charged with serious felonies enter the justice system. As written, SB422 eliminates automatic charging for children aged 14, and 15, and reduces the list of charges for 16 and 17 year olds. **Quaker Voice of Maryland supports the request of Maryland Youth Justice Coalition for amendments that would end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger.**

If you are interested in learning more about the issue and how passing this legislation, with amendments, will lead to positive change for youth I recommend you review the Maryland Youth Justice Coalition website:

<https://www.mdjuvenilejustice.org/youth-equity-safety-act>

We encourage a FAVORABLE with amendments report for this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

Molly Finch

Working Group Member, on behalf of Quaker Voice of Maryland

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