

**SB #0422**

**Miner L. Brown**

**Favorable**

**Title: Juvenile Court-Jurisdiction**

**Sponsor: Senator William C. Smith, Chair, Judicial Proceedings**

**Submitted by Miner L (Moe) Brown of District 11**

A CASA Ally, Active in City Scouting for years, Habitat for Humanity volunteer for 9+ years, and Member, Social Advocacy Committee at Chizuk Amuno Congregation, Pikesville, MD

First, thank you Senator Smith for your leadership in sponsoring bill, (SB#0422). In many ways this legislation follows previous enactments over the last four years that initially corrected several wrongs in the treatment provided to youth offenders designed to end the practice of "**autocharging**" for a long list of offenses (33). Then the MD State Legislature reversed course in subsequent legislation. This current bill now recognizes ways in which a better balance of firm justice can be employed; it could still go further in correcting the existing law.

Goals for any new legislation need to deal with juvenile justice issues expressed below:

1. **A shocking statistic-** Maryland sends more youth to adult court based on offense types; more than any other state per capita in the country except Alabama! Is this where Maryland belongs?;
2. **Charging kids as adults is short-sided and has continually led to poor results.** Youth incarceration increases the likelihood of recidivism and harms their educational attainment, lifetime wages, and future health outcomes as adults. Continuing to operate under the same failed system, on-going costs to the State continue to rise and a kid's future life is lost, gone-a statistic of the "System";
3. **Automatically charging youth in adult court absolutely ignores solid research** that shows adolescent brains are still developing and have some years before they reach maturity; and
4. **Fund the Juvenile Division of the Office of Public Defender (JDOPD).** They know their job. They have evidence based successes while functioning under unnecessary monetary handicaps. Their results are measurable. Take some of the saved money from eliminating jail time before arraignment, and put it here to enhance the success of JDOPD expanded role.

Current practice of automatically charging children as adults puts these kids directly into adult detention facilities. In 2020, despite more than a half-decade of falling youth arrests and declining rates of youth incarceration, since 1914 when the Justice Policy Institute 1<sup>st</sup> analyzed the cost of secure youth confinement in Maryland, the average annual cost of a young person then was \$400,000. The average state cost of secure youth confinement has been calculated to be over \$588. per day. With the number of average days of initial confinement now at 103 days, the cost per youth is over \$60,564. before arraignment. Only 12% of teenagers tried as adults were convicted in 2022. What a waste of financial and human resources!

It is time for the Legislature to join the overwhelming majority of other states who have passed laws to treat kids like kids. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony as a concerned longtime resident of Maryland and 84- year-old voter with a professional career in health care management who is very concerned with the future success of all of our youth.