



**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB0333:
CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION OF MINORS—ADMISSIBILITY
OF STATEMENTS
UNFAVORABLE**

TO: Senator William C. Smith, Chair, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair and the members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Co-Chair, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: January 30, 2025

Decades ago, Maryland joined a “tough-on-crime” movement that treats many minors as adults and increases their penalties. These policies have led to large youth prison populations that disproportionately impact poor children and children of color. Police who interrogate youth currently are permitted to lie to them, seeking to induce confessions. Children are impressionable and are not aware of their rights. They thus may make statements just to please the authority figure. This immoral practice leads to false convictions of juveniles at a rate three times higher than adults, according to one study. Such unreliable statements and confessions should be inadmissible in court.

This bill would exacerbate that problem. This Bill would expand the evidentiary rule on the admissibility of out of court statements made by child victims or witnesses to make admissible an out of court statement made by a child to a forensic interviewer. Making the adult who is interviewing a forensic interviewer does not change the nature of the interrogation. That deprives a child of protection that the law currently provides. We as people of faith, believe that all children are God’s children, deserving of equal dignity and respect, and our love. This Bill would deprive them of a protection that they desperately need.

We respectfully request an unfavorable report.