



NAACP

Howard County Branch

#7020

Senate Bill 422

Chairman; Will Smith

Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 4, 2025 1 p.m.

NAACP Howard County Branch #7020

Willie Flowers; Branch President

To Chairman Will Smith and the Committee. I am Willie Flowers, Branch President of the NAACP Howard County #7020. I am writing in support of SB-422 with amendments. The idea of charging and sentencing a child as an adult and then incarcerating them in a prison with adults is cruel and unusual punishment and should end in Maryland.

Regardless of how you look at it, the fact that our state imprisons youth sends a terrible message to our state and the world that we are still using an antiquated practice to represent what we think about young people in our state. Continuing to do so on showcases that we have complete contempt for youth in our community have made mistakes and trying them as adults says that we don't believe that they will ever change their lives.

Like the period that we are in now, (when politics and marketing wins of good sense) the political call to arms that propelled such a policy was ill-conceived and the long-term effects have been devastating especially to African American families. From the time that the punitive class said "do adult crime, you do adult time." The message stuck and the statute that caused children to be tried as adults has been policy in the state of Maryland. This took away the judges oversight of discretion. That is the problem.

The history of it says that we followed other states but many states have rescinded the practice out of compassion for the individuals and their families who have had to pick up the pieces after seeing their children grow into returning

citizens who come home traumatized and in many cases disabled. It is time for Maryland to do the same thing.

We understand the young people should be held to order but we also know that most young people don't have positive access points so negative options about lifestyles are what they have to live by. We are just saying also that compassion should mean that we can give the judge discretion to determine if youth should appear in juvenile court where young people should belong. Ultimately, the decision should be made on a case-by-case basis and not by a statute that doesn't work.

I urge a favorable report on SB-422.