



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-3185 • 301-858-3185 • 800-492-7122 Ext. 3185 • Fax 410-841-3175 • 301-858-3175 • Black.Caucus@house.state.md.us

## EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

### **Chair**

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, District 20

### **1st Vice Chair**

Delegate Melissa Walls, District 40

### **2nd Vice Chair**

Delegate Karen R. Tolos, District 25

### **Treasurer**

Delegate Marlon Amprey, District 40

### **Secretary**

Delegate Jamila J. Woods, District 26

### **Financial Secretary**

Senator Arthur Ellis, District 28

### **Chaplain**

Delegate Jeffrie E. Long, Jr., District 27B

### **Parliamentarian**

Delegate Stephanie Smith, District 45

### **Historian**

Delegate Cheryl E. Pasteur, District 11A

### **Executive Director**

Ufuoma O. Agarin, J.D.

## MEMBERS

Senator Malcolm Augustine, District 47

Senator Benjamin Brooks, District 10

Senator Jill P. Carter, District 41

Senator Nick Charles, District 25

Senator Antonio L. Hayes, District 40

Senator Michael A. Jackson, District 27

Senator Cory V. McCray, District 45

Senator C. Anthony Muse, District 26

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., District 20

Senator Charles E. Sydnor III, Esq., District 44

Senator Alanzo T. Washington, District 22

Senator Mary L. Washington, District 43

Senator Ron Watson, District 23

Delegate Gabriel Acevero, District 39

Delegate Jacqueline T. Addison, District 45

Delegate Tiffany Alston, District 24

Delegate Vanessa E. Attabear, District 13

Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, District 32

Delegate Adrian Boato, District 23

Delegate Regina T. Boyce, District 43A

Delegate Frank M. Conway, Jr., District 40

Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield, District 19

Delegate Debra Davis, District 28

Delegate Diana M. Fennell, District 47A

Delegate Kevin M. Harris, District 27A

Delegate Andrea Fletcher Harrison, District 24

Delegate Shaneka Henson, District 30A

Delegate Terri L. Hill, District 12

Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., District 23

Delegate Julian Ivey, District 47A

Delegate Carl Jackson, District 8

Delegate Andre V. Johnson, Jr., District 34A

Delegate Adrienne A. Jones, District 10

Delegate Jazz Lewis, District 24

Delegate Robbyn Lewis, District 46

Delegate Ashanti Martinez, District 22

Delegate Aletheia McCaskill, District 44B

Delegate Bernice Mireku-North, District 14

Delegate Edith J. Patterson, District 28

Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, District 21

Delegate N. Scott Phillips, District 10

Delegate Pamela Queen, District 14

Delegate Kent Roberson, District 25

Delegate Denise G. Roberts, District 25

Delegate Mike Rogers, District 32

Delegate Malcolm P. Ruff, District 41

Delegate Gary Simmons, District 12B

Delegate Dani Tavaras, District 47B

Delegate Kym Taylor, District 23

Delegate Veronica Turner, District 26

Delegate Jennifer White Holland, District 10

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, District 22

Delegate C.T. Wilson, District 28

Delegate Greg Wims, District 39

Delegate Caylin Young, District 45

February 4, 2025

Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for Senate Bill 422 (SB0422) – Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction. This bill introduces essential reforms to Maryland’s juvenile justice system, ensuring that more youth cases remain under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court rather than being automatically transferred to adult court. Senate Bill 422 is a 2025 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.

Black youth in Maryland are disproportionately charged and sentenced as adults, exacerbating systemic inequalities within the criminal justice system. According to data from the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Black youth made up 67.7% of youth to adult transfer files in 2016, even though they are only 14% of the youth population. These disparities contribute to higher rates of incarceration and recidivism, disrupting families and communities across the state.

Senate Bill 422 ensures that juveniles have access to rehabilitative services and educational opportunities within the juvenile court system, rather than being subjected to the punitive measures of the adult criminal system. Research has consistently shown that youth processed in the juvenile system have significantly lower recidivism rates than those tried as adults. By prioritizing rehabilitation over incarceration, this bill aligns with evidence-based practices that promote long-term public safety and successful reintegration.

Additionally, keeping more cases within the juvenile system reduces the likelihood of young individuals being exposed to the dangers of adult prisons, where they are at a heightened risk of violence, abuse, and mental health deterioration. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention found that youth held in adult facilities are 34% more likely to be rearrested compared to those in the juvenile system. This bill provides a fairer approach by ensuring that minors receive age-appropriate interventions rather than being subjected to lifelong criminal records.

To promote transparency and accountability, Senate Bill 422 ensures that juvenile cases are handled with a focus on restorative justice principles. This approach not

only benefits the affected youth but also strengthens communities by reducing recidivism and allowing young individuals to become productive members of society.

By addressing the disproportionate impact of the adult criminal justice system on Black youth, Senate Bill 422 advances principles of justice and equity while allowing Maryland to redirect resources toward rehabilitation and community support. The bill's provisions reflect the Caucus' commitment to addressing systemic disparities and advocating for reforms that uphold human rights within the criminal justice system.

Senate Bill 422 represents a thoughtful and equitable approach to juvenile justice reform. It balances public safety with fiscal responsibility and humane treatment, ensuring that policies reflect our values of equity and fairness. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 422 and urges this committee to make a favorable report.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland