



Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

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DATE: February 24, 2025

BILL NUMBER: HB 873

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) supports House Bill 873 and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

In Maryland, the juvenile court system generally has jurisdiction to hear cases involving allegations of offenses committed by juveniles that are 13 years old or older. The juvenile court can also hear cases involving juveniles aged 10 to 12 that involve certain serious offenses, offenses that signal that the juvenile has a significant need that should be addressed by the juvenile court system: crimes of violence, certain firearm crimes, aggravated cruelty to animals, or sexual offense in the third degree.

HB 873 is straightforward bill that draws from the debate surrounding a provision of House Bill 814 last session. This bill vests the juvenile court system with the jurisdiction to hear cases involving theft of a motor vehicle alleged to have been committed by a juvenile between the age of 10 and 12 so long as the juvenile has previously been referred to an at-risk youth prevention and diversion program for a violation of certain serious offenses. This provision reflect the concerns raised by advocates on both sides of this issue – on one side, witnesses urged this Committee not to unnecessarily net very young juveniles into the juvenile court system, while on the other, witnesses testified to the serious, disruptive, and pervasive motor vehicle theft occurring in their jurisdictions, and the inability of the current system to seemingly put an end to it.

When a juvenile has previously been referred to an at-risk youth prevention and diversion program for a violation of a serious crime, and goes on to steal a motor vehicle, it signals that a higher level of services is needed – the level of services that can be provided by the juvenile court system. This bill does not punish juveniles or put them in adult court – these juveniles will have their cases heard in the juvenile court and, if adjudicated delinquent, receive the services and the supervision of the juvenile court system, pursuant to its rehabilitative purpose. The provisions in this bill strike the right balance on this issue, and ensure that juveniles who, by their conduct, demonstrate a need for additional supervision are permitted to have their cases heard in the juvenile court system, at a time when intervention is more likely to have a significant positive effect in their lives.