



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony Favorable for HB1433 Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 1433, which expands the jurisdiction of the juvenile court by ensuring that children alleged to have committed certain offenses remain within the juvenile justice system rather than being automatically tried as adults. This bill is a crucial step toward a more just, rehabilitative, and effective juvenile justice system in Maryland. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Maryland's current policies disproportionately funnel young people—especially Black and Brown youth—into the adult criminal legal system, where they face severe and often irreparable harm. Scientific research and legal precedent confirm that children differ significantly from adults in their cognitive development, impulse control, and capacity for rehabilitation. Despite this, Maryland remains one of the states that still transfers juveniles to adult courts at alarming rates, disproportionately impacting communities of color.

Why HB 1433 is Essential:

1. **Prioritizing Rehabilitation Over Punishment:** The juvenile justice system is specifically designed to focus on rehabilitation rather than retribution. When young people are charged and tried as adults, they lose access to critical services that could help them reintegrate into society as productive individuals. HB 1433 ensures that young people receive age-appropriate support and interventions.
2. **Reducing Recidivism:** Studies show that youth prosecuted in the adult system are significantly more likely to reoffend than those who remain in the juvenile system. By keeping juveniles in the court system designed for their rehabilitation, Maryland can lower recidivism rates and improve public safety in the long term.
3. **Protecting Vulnerable Youth from Harm:** Youth incarcerated in adult facilities face extreme risks, including higher rates of physical and sexual violence, mental health deterioration, and increased likelihood of self-harm. HB 1433 helps protect children from these dangers by keeping them in juvenile facilities better equipped to address their developmental needs.
4. **Addressing Racial Disparities in Juvenile Justice:** Maryland's youth transfer laws disproportionately impact Black and Brown children, reinforcing systemic racial inequities in the criminal justice system. HB 1433 helps mitigate this harm by ensuring that all youth, regardless of race or background, have access to due process and rehabilitative opportunities in juvenile court.

HB 1433 aligns with evidence-based practices, constitutional principles, and the growing consensus among experts that young people deserve a second chance through rehabilitative justice, not harsh adult sentencing. It is imperative that Maryland takes this step toward ensuring fairness, equity, and effective justice for all children.

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We urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass HB1433 and reaffirm the state's commitment to juvenile justice reform. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

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