



Youth As Resources, Inc. (YAR)
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Judiciary Committee

Ways and Means Committee

HOUSE BILL 1433:

Altering the jurisdiction of the juvenile court by repealing provisions specifying that the juvenile court does not have jurisdiction over a child alleged to have committed certain acts.

DATE: February 24, 2025

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH ADMENDMENTS

Youth As Resources (YAR) is a youth-led organization committed to grant-making, leadership development, community organizing, and institutional change. We empower ourselves and our peers to address the root causes of pressing issues through training, organizing, collaboration, and funding.

Our 22-member Board of Directors—comprised entirely of Baltimore City youth aged 14-24—governs the organization, overseeing two grant cycles per year, fund development, program priorities, and outcome evaluation. Each year, we establish an issue agenda based on our lived experiences and those of our peers. For FY 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025), our focus areas include school police accountability, school climate, youth homelessness, and mental health/disability awareness.

Youth As Resources supports House Bill 1433 with amendments to ensure that all children and youth, regardless of the charge, begin their cases in juvenile court.

In Maryland, youth as young as 14 are automatically charged in adult court for 33 offenses. House Bill 1433 seeks to remove some of these charges from automatic adult jurisdiction—but that is not enough. We firmly believe that all children should start in juvenile court. The juvenile justice system exists for a reason: we are not adults and should not be treated as such.

Furthermore, Black and Brown youth are disproportionately represented in the legal system compared to white youth. Our adolescent behavior is often criminalized due to bias, leading to higher arrest rates, more frequent charges, harsher sentencing, and more cases being moved to adult court. Between July 2023 and June 2024, 932 children in Maryland were charged as adults. Of those, 755—81%—were Black.

Being charged as an adult has lifelong consequences. A criminal record can make it harder to get a job, pursue education, or build a stable future. One mistake should not define a child's entire life.

Beyond legal consequences, adult prisons are dangerous for youth. Young people housed in adult facilities are at higher risk of physical and sexual violence. Many are placed in solitary confinement for their "protection," which has devastating emotional and psychological effects. Studies have shown that prolonged isolation can lead to depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts—outcomes no child should have to endure.

Charging children as adults does not make communities safer; it perpetuates generational hurt and harm. Instead of providing the support and rehabilitation young people need, it traps them in cycles of incarceration, trauma, and lost opportunity.

It's also fundamentally unfair. We don't allow kids to vote, drink, or sign contracts because we recognize they are still developing—so why should we be treated as adults in the criminal legal system?

We urge you to support House Bill 1433 with amendments to ensure that all youth cases begin in juvenile court, where they belong. Thank you.