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TESTIMONY ON HB 0683

**Criminal Law – Criminal or Delinquent Act of a Child – Liability of a Parent, Guardian, or Custodian
February 21, 2025**

The University of Maryland, Baltimore Center for Violence Prevention (CVP) opposes HB 0683, which would prohibit the parent, guardian, or custodian of a child from intentionally, knowingly, recklessly, or negligently acting or failing to act in a manner that results in a child committing a crime or a delinquent act. This language is intentionally vague and may have a disparate impact on Black and/or low income parents. Charging parents does not address the issues which put youth at risk for committing crimes and engaging with the juvenile justice system.

The Center for Violence Prevention is a community informed initiative of the University of Maryland, Baltimore in collaboration with the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical Center – the first of its kind. Our aim is to build resilient communities for all through the prevention and intervention of all forms of violence and trauma. We do this in an interdisciplinary, collaborative fashion where we conduct community-based participatory research, provide creative and impactful education, and inform and advocate for policies that strengthen our communities to prevent violence and trauma. We oppose this bill because it does not strengthen our communities but contribute to their detriment.

Juvenile offenses have decreased dramatically nationwide since the 1990s, but concerns remain high with regards to recidivism rates and the systemic overrepresentation of youth of color, youth with disabilities and youth in poverty. Families most impacted are comprised of parents and guardians who are struggling financially – working long hours and/or multiple jobs. This limits their ability to provide the level of supervision that they want. This bill disproportionately targets families which are already vulnerable, especially low-income, racial ethnic minorities such as Black families. Financially charging these parents and/or incarcerating them for their perceived actions would be an overreach. There is no shortage of data on the negative impacts of parental incarceration on their children – impacts which are felt for the rest of their lives. This includes the fact that parental incarceration is an Adverse Childhood Experience which are already disproportionately experienced by Black and Latino children compared to white children.

For these reasons, the UMB CVP opposes HB 0683. We would be willing to work with the sponsors of the bill to draft something that would be more impactful in addressing issues related to the rehabilitation of juveniles in our state.