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TESTIMONY ON HBI433 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: David M. Friedman

My name is David Friedman. I am a resident of District 14 in Colesville/Cloverly. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of HBI433, Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction.

I am an active member of Oseh Shalom, a Jewish Reconstructionist congregation located in Laurel, MD. Jewish tradition emphasizes that the Divine encompasses both justice and mercy and that all of us deserve a life with dignity, respect and safety. Jewish history and values also have long recognized the differing capacities of children and adults. While Maryland has made progress on youth justice issues in previous years, the practice of automatically charging kids as adults urgently needs to change as well, since it ignores definitive research that adolescent brains are rapidly developing and have yet to reach full maturity.

Studies indicate that automatically charging kids as young as 14 as adults also leads to higher recidivism, as well as subjecting them to increased isolation and physical and sexual violence. It is also inefficient and damaging as 87% of kids in Maryland charged as adults end up waived back down to the juvenile system and time spent in the adult system delays getting critical rehabilitative services. Limiting automatic charging of juveniles as adults would also significantly reduce the criminalization and incarceration of Black youth as 81% of kids charged in adult court in Maryland are Black. I feel strongly that it is well past time for Maryland to join the other 26 states that have passed laws to limit pathways for juveniles into adult courts and end Maryland's status as the state that sends more young people to adult court based on offense type than any other state per capita except Alabama.

HBI433 makes significant progress by eliminating automatic charging for children aged 14 and 15, and reduces the list of charges for 16 and 17 year olds. In light of the evidence cited above, I believe this is a good start. However, it does not go far enough and thus I encourage amending HBI433 to end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger. This simply changes where juvenile cases start, allowing them to be waived up to adult court after judicial review. **Thus, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on HBI433.**