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TESTIMONY ON HB#1433 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH
AMENDMENTS
Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction

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

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments of HB1433, Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction

This bill centers youth justice within our criminal systems. I am part of a coalition with The Maryland Youth Justice Coalition ¹ “...which believes that all young people have a unique capacity for growth and achievement that can best occur in supportive and well-resourced communities outside of the legal system. The harsh treatment of young people under the cover of law, unduly punishing them for their juvenile and adolescent mistakes, is an attack on the youth itself. In Maryland as elsewhere, this injustice falls disproportionately upon youth of color and particularly punishes Black teenagers.”

My Jewish faith teaches:

Jewish sacred texts teach us that the world was created with both justice and mercy, and that children breathe life into the world. But here in Maryland, children who are charged with certain crimes are sentenced as if they were adults. That is neither just nor merciful, and it robs these children and the world of the breath of life.

...at creation G-d thought, ‘If I run the world on the basis of compassion, sins will abound. If on the basis of justice, the world would not endure.’ That is why G-d runs the world with both justice and compassion. If only it will survive!’ (B’reishit Rabba 11:15).

As reported by Maryland Matters: ²

Maryland is among the worst states in the nation when it comes to the number of prison inmates who began their time behind bars for crimes they committed as children, according to a report set to be released Wednesday.

¹ <https://www.md youth justice.org/>

² <https://marylandmatters.org/2024/11/20/report-calls-for-reforms-in-marylands-handling-of-youth-tried-and-imprisoned-as-adults/>

With 6% of its overall prison population incarcerated for crimes they committed as minors, Maryland trailed only Louisiana, Wisconsin and South Carolina, according to [the report](#), “Disposable Children: The Prevalence of Child Abuse and Trauma Among Children Prosecuted and Incarcerated as Adults in Maryland.”

The statistics paint a bleak picture of what is happening to our youth in Maryland:

- 87% of kids in Maryland charged as adults end up waived back down to the juvenile system, but the time spent in the adult system without rehabilitative services is damaging. Kids charged as adults have a 44% chance of being reincarcerated, compared to 17% for those charged as juveniles.
- 81% of kids charged in adult court in Maryland are Black. Ending this practice would reduce not only violent crime, but also the criminalization and incarceration of Black youth, who are disproportionately targeted by our legal system.

This bill will begin progress on these issues in Maryland through 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.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report with amendments on HB#1433.