

HB1433_MikkyoMcDaniel_FWA

2/26/2025

Mikkyo McDaniel
Towson, MD 21286

**TESTIMONY ON HB1433 - POSITION: (FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Autocharge Bill**

Commented [1]: Excellent! This makes much more sense now!

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

FROM: Mikkyo McDaniel

My name is Mikkyo McDaniel, and I am a resident of District 43B in Baltimore, Maryland. I am submitting this testimony in support of the Autocharge Bill (HB1433).

As a senior college student studying policy, politics, and international affairs, I have spent considerable time analyzing the intersection of law enforcement, the justice system, and the disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities. Born and raised in Baltimore, I have witnessed firsthand how our city's justice system too often fails its young people, particularly Black youth. This is why I am compelled to speak out against the practice of automatically charging children as adults, a policy that not only harms youth but also disproportionately impacts Black communities.

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to the practice of automatically charging children as adults within the state of Maryland. As we all know, the criminal justice system is meant to serve as a path to rehabilitation, not as a tool for further harm, especially for our young people. Charging children as adults undermines this purpose, exacerbating their chances for long-term negative outcomes, and perpetuates a cycle of injustice that has no place in a society that claims to value second chances.

Children are not miniature adults. They are still in the process of developing physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Brain science has demonstrated time and again that the human brain, particularly the areas involved in decision-making, impulse control, and understanding long-term consequences, continues to mature well into a person's mid-20s. To charge a child as an adult and subject them to an adult sentence is to ignore this developmental reality. We are condemning them to a system that is designed to punish rather than rehabilitate, and this is a profound injustice.

Automatically charging children as adults disproportionately impacts communities of color and economically disadvantaged families. It further perpetuates systemic inequalities and leads to outcomes that are not just harmful to the individual child, but to society. These children, who often come from broken homes or neighborhoods plagued by violence, are being locked in a system that robs them of the opportunity to change, to grow, and to contribute positively to their communities in the future. In contrast, when given access to age-appropriate rehabilitation programs, education, and community support, many young offenders can and do turn their lives around.

We must not forget that these children are still learning, still capable of growth, and still deserving of hope and opportunity. Instead of subjecting them to adult penalties, we should be investing in programs that focus on rehabilitation, education, and the development of skills that will help them become productive members of society.

I urge you to reject any measure that automatically charges children as adults in Maryland. Let us lead with compassion and a clear understanding of the science of adolescent development. Let us recognize that every young person deserves the chance to make amends and rebuild their life. We owe it to our children—and to the future of Maryland—to do better than this.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HBI433.