

February 24, 2025

House Bill 1433  
Chairman; Luke Clippinger  
House Judiciary  
February 26, 2025 1 p.m.



Two Gems Consulting Services,

Dear Chairman Luke Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

I am Dr. Geri Lynn Peak, an independent public health and research consultant; former administrator of Baltimore Youth Initiative H.S. (2012-2016) with peer education and youth development expertise and a member of the democratically and anonymously elected local governing body of the Bahá'í Faith community in Baltimore City (writing independently).

I urge lawmakers to reject the exploitative policy of trying, convicting, and sentencing children as adults. This practice is fundamentally flawed and has had devastating effects on many families, particularly within African American communities. It is time for Maryland to correct this injustice. Further, I stand in solidarity with **amending the request to end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger**. This would still allow individual cases to be waived up to adult court after judicial review.

Youth are harmed by incarceration. Our system reinforces rather than rehabilitates antisocial behavior and the young are particularly vulnerable. God's divine policy is to show mercy to all. The punitive measures disrupt the channels of transformative learning that can provide, where rehabilitation and restorative practice along with, where necessary, removal from society in appropriate environments can redeem young people's social fortunes in society. This law has become a blunt instrument that disregards the unique circumstances of youth. Many states have recognized the harms of this practice and successfully rescinded it out of compassion for the individuals and families affected. It is time for Maryland to follow suit. Compassion should guide us in allowing judges the discretion to determine the appropriate venue for young offenders, whether juvenile or adult court, on a case-by-case basis.

I urge you to support HB-1433 to end the harmful practice of charging children as adults in Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration and Harambee! (we all pull together)



Geri Lynn Peak, DrPH, MPH  
Spiritual Demographer, Owner and Chief Insight Facilitator, Two Gems Consulting Services