



February 24, 2025

TESTIMONY ON HB1433/SB422

Position: SUPPORT (FAV) with Amendments

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

FROM: Quaker Voice of Maryland, by Molly Finch

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of Quaker Voice of Maryland, a faith-based advocacy group formed to urge our state legislature to act on matters of injustice. Quakers across Maryland told our advocacy group that injustices in the state criminal justice system are deeply concerning, and we should support policies that reduce harms people experience from incarceration.

Quaker Voice of Maryland supports HB1433 - Juvenile Court – Jurisdiction with amendments. This bill stands out as important legislation because it adds protections for our youth who are entering the justice system by ending automatic charging of children as adults based on their accused crime. There are many reasons this legislation can lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities, and I will highlight two in this testimony:

(1) Youth who are charged in adult court may be less likely to have access to rehabilitative services that are appropriate for their needs, which can lead to reoffending in the future, and

(2) Youth who are charged as adults are at an increased risk of sexual assault, physical harm, and being placed in solitary confinement in adult prisons as a protection mechanism, which in itself is harmful.

To be clear, this bill does not mean youth cases can never reach adult court, but it does change the way youth charged with serious felonies enter the justice system. As written, HB1433 eliminates automatic charging for children aged 14, and 15, and reduces the list of charges for 16 and 17 year olds. **Quaker Voice of Maryland supports the request of Maryland Youth Justice Coalition for amendments that would end automatic charging for all offenses and for all children 17 and younger.**

You can learn more about the issue and how passing this legislation, with amendments, will lead to positive change for youth through the Maryland Youth Justice Coalition website: <https://www.md youthjustice.org/youth-equity-safety-act>

We encourage a FAVORABLE with amendments report for this essential legislation.