

OPPOSE HB 68 – Children suspected of a Crime of Violence – Prohibition on In-Person Attendance

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



January 20, 2025

To: Chair Delegate Atterbeary and Ways and Means Committee Members
From: Jenny Zito and Bill Carlson, MAJR Executive Committee

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) asks you to oppose HB 0068 Children suspected of a Crime of Violence – Prohibition on In-Person Attendance.

We believe that it is ill-advised and unjust to create a new provision of Maryland law which would prevent anyone merely *identified as a suspect* in a crime of violence from attending school in person. It is a core value of our legal system that until a person is convicted of a crime, they are presumed innocent of that crime. This bill would violate this principle. In addition, due to the length of time a case can take to resolve, it would cause substantial harm to the student. Our experience shows that once a student leaves the normal school environment it is highly unlikely that they will complete their education, which obviously has lifetime consequences both for the student and society in general.

A recent report from the Department of Juvenile Services reported that, in recent years, only about 12% of Maryland juveniles charged as adults with serious felonies were convicted of that charge, demonstrating the lack of correlation between charging and actual guilty verdicts. HB0068 relates to suspects, not even charged individuals.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation and urges the committee to give HB 0068 an unfavorable report.