

## THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

*Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.*



**SB0296 Juveniles - Detention and Confinement - Limitations on  
Juvenile Contact with Incarcerated Adults  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 4, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on SB0296 - Juveniles - Detention and Confinement - Limitations on Juvenile Contact with Incarcerated Adults.**

Over 50% of youth in foster care encounter the juvenile justice system by age 17, with up to 90% interacting with it before leaving care, often termed the "foster care -to-prison pipeline"<sup>1</sup>. Placing these youth in settings where they are confined alongside or in contact with incarcerated adults compounds that trauma, and undermines the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile system. SB0296 reinforces a basic child welfare principle: children, regardless of system involvement, deserve developmentally appropriate, safe environments that do not expose them to additional harm.

SB0296 seeks to severely limit, if not fully prohibit, children being placed with adult incarcerated individuals in correctional facility spaces. Instead, youth 17 years old and younger will remain in juvenile facilities. Youth may temporarily be held at an adult correctional facility for not more than 6 hours in order for them to be transferred to the nearest youth center. This bill has a two-year delayed effective date in order to allow state Department of Juvenile Services and Maryland local jurisdictions to implement these changes.

SB0296 aligns with child welfare goals of prevention, healing, and long-term stability. Research and lived experience consistently show that exposure to adult incarceration environments increases the risk of physical harm, emotional distress, and future system involvement. For youth who have already been failed by multiple systems, this kind of exposure can deepen mistrust, worsen mental health outcomes, and disrupt efforts toward permanency and wellbeing. By limiting juvenile contact with incarcerated adults, SB0296 helps promote trauma-informed practice, reduce the likelihood of recidivism, and ensure that system-involved youth are treated first and foremost as children in need of

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<sup>1</sup> [Jaxzia Perez, "The foster care-to-prison pipeline: A road to incarceration" \*The Criminal Law Practitioner – American University Washington College of Law\* February 24, 2024](#)

support. As child welfare advocates, we support this bill as a way to advance cross-system responses and protect some of Maryland's most vulnerable young people.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on SB0296 - Juveniles - Detention and Confinement - Limitations on Juvenile Contact with Incarcerated Adults.**<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include Center for Hope, Court Appointed Special Advocates (MD CASA), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), Everstand, The Family Tree, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers - MD, TurnAround, Inc, and individual members of the coalition.