



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

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LETTER IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 296: Limitations on Juvenile Contact with Incarcerated Adults

February 2, 2026

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I write to express strong support for Senate Bill 296. MCVRC provides legal services to crime victims statewide and is the nation's largest nonprofit of its kind. We represent many clients devastated by the actions of juvenile offenders. We advocate balanced reforms that still protect the safety of Marylanders.

SB 296 directly addresses a critical problem with our court system: the holding of arrested juveniles in adult jails before judicial review.

Currently, if Commissioners order a youth charged with serious crime to be detained, they are held in adult facility until the next business day when a judge reviews this detention. The law requires that youth be moved to a juvenile detention facility except for a few very narrow exceptions. In reality, detentions longer than intended by the statute have been occurring regularly because the youth stay in the adult facility until the Department of Juvenile Services is prepared to accept the youth. This delay by DJS is unacceptable and can be eliminated by SB 296. This Bill gives DJS no option but to provide for these youth, just as the adult jails must at this time. The current practice is unsafe and inappropriate, as jails are not designed for minors.

Passage of SB 296 provides these key protections:

- Juveniles avoid adult jails entirely post-arrest, moving directly to age-appropriate facilities.
- Judicial oversight remains intact: the law still provides that judges review cases next business day to determine if detention or release is appropriate.
- Courts retain authority and supervision over serious cases like armed robbery, assault, and firearms offenses, and the victims of crime have more protection.
- A targeted fix preserving the adult-start process for violent crimes, where transfer hearings ensure amenability to treatment before putting the juvenile into the voluntary, benefits-based juvenile system.
- Victims benefit from the thoughtful, safer processes that are in place in the transfer system. The revolving door of crime in the juvenile system should not be where the most serious crimes start. Only after determining that the youth is amenable to treatment should a court move a serious offender into a voluntary juvenile system that has no power to enforce its rules.

With the current system of laws, the most serious juvenile offenders start in adult court—they are given one or two attorneys from the state, state-funded psychological evaluations, and judicial review of extensive evidence.

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Most youth have their cases transfer to juvenile court, but only after in-depth analysis, which maximizes success for youth, victims, and community alike. **SB 296 complements this framework without undermining it, it removes the possibility of juveniles in an adult jail, and unlike proposals like SB 323/HB 409 (Youth Charging Reform Act) which without considered decision by a court of law places serious cases in a impotent and weak juvenile system.**

Maryland's communities deserve reforms that prioritize youth welfare and safety. SB 296 solves the jail problem cleanly: No adult contact, no new risks. Year after year, this bill has been pushed to the side, hurting our juveniles and our communities; now is the time to pass it. SB 296 advances second chances in juvenile court while safeguarding everyone—

Thank you for considering a favorable report on SB 296 and your commitment to all Marylanders—juveniles and victims alike.

Sincerely,



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