



**House Bill 449
Judiciary Committee
February 12, 2026**

Position: Unfavorable

The Choice Program at UMBC is opposed to House Bill 449. This bill would authorize a law enforcement officer to conduct an otherwise lawful custodial interrogation of a child if the child's parent, guardian, or custodian consents to the custodial interrogation of the child without the child's consultation with an attorney. Choice maintains that children and emerging adults must be advised directly by an attorney that they have a fundamental right not to incriminate themselves.

As a mentoring program, we have served more than 27,000 Maryland youth who are systems-involved since 1988. Choice youth remind us that they should not be defined by their worst mistake. Presently, Choice works with young people and their families in Baltimore City as well as Baltimore, Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties; we recently expanded to Harford and Anne Arundel Counties. Choice serves as an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline. Our primary goal is to reduce the number of Black and Latine young people who are ensnared in the youth legal system. Our model seeks to dismantle racist structures and, instead, employs strengths-based approaches focused on positive youth development. We hold high expectations for youth and parents as well as high levels of support. These guiding principles are essential in addressing racial inequities at an individual and systemic level.

We have decades of experience with young people who have been interrogated by law enforcement officers, some of whom may still be in elementary school. We know firsthand how scared, anxious, and intimidated children are when confronted by authority figures. We call on our elected officials to recognize that youth are young people—humans—who possess basic constitutional rights. It is the responsibility of this legislature to protect young people's Miranda rights and preserve the Child Interrogation Protection Act of 2022.

For these reasons, The Choice Program opposes HB 449.

For more information contact:

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