

February 12, 2026

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TESTIMONY ON HB0409 POSITION: FAVORABLE

Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Barbara Schaffer

My name is Barbara Schaffer. I am a resident of District 17. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0409, Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act).

I am a parent, a grandparent, a former school teacher, a member of Chabad Shul of Potomac, and a concerned citizen of Maryland. I am in support of HB0409 because I believe children under the age of 16, who are accused of crimes should be charged as children. Sending children to adult detention facilities with fewer resources and less access to education than in the juvenile system leads to significantly higher recidivism, as well as increased isolation and physical and sexual violence. That is why more than half of US states have passed common sense laws to treat kids as kids and keep them out of adult court.

I am compelled to support this legislation because it aligns with my Jewish values. I believe all the children in Maryland are our future and must be nurtured and educated to their full potential, not just my own children. That is why I'm concerned that 81% of children charged in adult court in Maryland are Black. We need to end the criminalization and incarceration of Black youth, who are disproportionately targeted by our legal system.

My values are such that I want justice and fair treatment for all of Maryland's children. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0409.**

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Barbara Schaffer