

HB 0409

Miner L. Moe) Brown

FAVORABLE

Title: Juvenile Court-Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)

Judiciary Committee Chair: Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett

Sponsored by Delegates Bartlett, Toles, and Lehman

This testimony is written in [strong support](#) of House Bill 0409, Juvenile Court Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act).

I am a 37-year resident of MD and District 11B. I have worked with youth and observed them in various schools in the city and elsewhere for years as noted below. I am a parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, Eagle Scout & Silver Beaver Awardee, a long-time naturalist guide and the 1st Life Time Achievement Awardee at Irvine Nature Center (Baltimore County) which included nature programs with children in several schools in the city, a Red Hat volunteer for Habitat for Humanity in various Baltimore locations such as Sandtown and East Baltimore (9+ years), an original CASA Ally, and member of the Social Justice Committee at our congregation.

I personally thank Delegate Bartlett, Judiciary Committee Chair for her leadership role in introducing this bill this year. When enacted, automatic referrals of juveniles to the adult court system will be significantly reduce. **Maryland incarcerates more youth in adult prisons per capita than any other state except Alabama. This is nothing to be proud of! It is time for reform that recognizes national best practice and finally aligns Maryland with federal law.**

Current laws **require** that we automatically charge youth as if they were adults, with long-term devastating results to the child, their families, and communities. It is well documented that this current practice “disproportionately impacts children of color (more than 80% of MD children charged as adults are Black), diverts resources away from critical services for children and families, and places children in dangerous environments”- adult jails- “that more often result in subsequent violent or general criminal behavior.”

When Bill 0409 becomes Law it will also cost tax-payers less money as fewer youth will be held in adult detention for expense long periods of time isolated for their “protection”, receiving few services, no education, and treatment awaiting their hearing in the adult system. **We have been waiting far too long for justice to be served in Maryland. It is now time to complete the process by approving HB0409.**