

Date of Hearing: February 4, 2026

Anita Lampel

Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON HB#0409 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Juvenile Court-Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act)

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice-chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0409, Juvenile Court Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act).

I am a retired psychologist who worked extensively with youth involved in the juvenile justice system in California, where I managed a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program for a large county and later did private work for the court system. I belong to Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. My Jewish values and my background and experience in this area unite in my statement that the current juvenile injustice system in Maryland must end. Per capita, we have more Black youth incarcerated than any other state except Alabama. The practice of automatically charging children as young as 14 in adult court has led to this horrific imbalance. Last year, you asked for yet another report on this issue. That was returned to you condemning the current state of affairs in no uncertain terms as both harmful to children and a waste of money. Maryland is better than this—isn't it? You are better than this—aren't you?

Let me give you an example from my personal experience. In California, all youth begin in juvenile court and the State's Attorney (there, the District Attorney) must argue for why the young person should be sent to adult court. A sixteen-year-old killed his father, who had been abusive to his mother and his brothers. He remained in juvenile court, received a sentence to a youth facility, and successfully completed high school there. He remains a good citizen to this day.

In conclusion, this bill will bring an end to this most egregious overcharging of children and the permanent harm it causes. I ask you to pass it and to lobby your fellow Senators for his passage in the legislature.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0409.

