



VISION - BRIDGE Maryland sees the state challenged by a history of inequity but engaged in community organizing for a more just tomorrow.

MISSION - BRIDGE Maryland uses intentional relationship building, organizing, and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world.

February 12, 2026

HB 449 Juvenile Justice Restoration Act

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair, Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis, and members of the committee,

On behalf of BRIDGE Maryland, Inc., a statewide interfaith organization, we do not support HB449 for the following reasons. Are we trying to subvert the Fifth Amendment rights of children now because that is how this bill is written? Some of the parents and guardians consulted on this bill also fall within the development concerns we articulated in support of the Child Interrogation Protection Act (CIPA). Likewise, C.I.P.A. works in the best interest of the child, and that's what laws should do: protect the vulnerable.

The Child Interrogation Protection Law is designed to explain, in legal terms at a child's age level, what it means to speak with law enforcement and state attorneys. Are we saying that parents are lawyers now? I have four degrees, including a doctorate, and some legal terms still baffle me. This bill is simply an attempt to dismantle a child's Constitutional 5th Amendment right! Please do not let false bravado-"parents and/or guardians know best"-lead them to make one of the most important decisions for their child's future.

Maryland's youngest citizens need safeguards against unwarranted involvement in the legal system. It is key to breaking institutional cycles of poverty and marginalization. Making that determination requires a proper understanding of the law and legal procedure that defense attorneys can provide. We urge you to vote UNFAVORABLY on HB449.

Sincerely

Marlon Tilghman

Rev. Dr. Marlon Tilghman

Bridge Maryland Executive Board Member & MYJC Steering Committee