

Date of Hearing *Thursday, February 4, 2026 at 11 AM*

Dianne E. Dumais
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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: Dianne Dumais

My name is Dianne Dumais. I am a resident of District 20. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0409, Juvenile Court - Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act).

I want to thank Chair Bartlett and Delegates Toles and Lehman for sponsoring this bill. I am a longtime Maryland resident and have lived in District 20 since 1998. We have raised our children here and have had experience with the Montgomery County police and justice system along the way.

When our younger child was 19 they were arrested for entering the second floor bathroom window of a neighborhood house. Although they were legally an adult and taken to an adult facility, they were traumatized and disoriented. The judge looked at the evidence in our child's case and gave a decision of probation before judgement. Our son completed probation without being convicted of the crime and has gone on to have stable employment and a productive life, without further incident. A juvenile in a family without the economic resources to hire a defense lawyer would most likely not be given this chance. Such outcomes have lifelong consequences, both emotional and economic. Autocharging of juveniles is also a racial equity issue. Over 77% of youth charged as adults in Maryland are black. I seriously doubt that my son would have been given a second chance if he were black.

HB#0409 should be passed to stop automatically charging 16 and 17 year olds as adults. Juvenile court judges need to do what they are trained to do: render judgement that fits the circumstances of the case before them. This will give all children a better chance to build a productive future for themselves, their families and our communities.

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