



MARYLAND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

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February 10, 2026

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House Judiciary Committee  
100 Taylor House Office Building  
101 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD. 21401

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RE: HB 449 - Juvenile Justice Restoration Act

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Position: OPPOSE

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Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the House Ways and Means Committee to report UNFAVORABLY on HB 449.

***Representative to APA Council***

Mary Fernandez, Ph.D.

The aim of this legislation is to allow youth to be questioned without an attorney present, provided the youth's parent has agreed to waive the youth's right to confer with counsel. As the brain of a child is not fully formed, it is all the more important that children have the ability to confer with counsel prior to giving any testimony. Youth are more vulnerable to giving false testimony under interrogation, and the consensus among researchers focusing on the intersection between adolescent development and the law proposes a completely different model of criminal prosecution altogether (Center for Law, Brain and Behavior, 2023). This legislation both deprives youth of their basic civil rights and flies in the face of the best practices proposed by psychology and legal researchers and practitioners.

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We urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 449. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

***Educational Affairs***

Shalena Wade, Ph.D.

***Ethics***

LaShaun Williams, Psy.D.

Respectfully submitted,

*Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
President

*Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

***Legislative***

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.

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Dana O'Brien, Ph.D.

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

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