



Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

[Jewish Voice for Peace](#) Baltimore and DC Metro chapters are submitting testimony **in support of HB409, the Youth Charging Reform Act**. Jewish Voice for Peace is a national Jewish organization working towards Palestinian freedom and Judaism beyond Zionism. We have over 3000 members and supporters in Maryland, with chapters in Baltimore and the DC Metro Area.

As an organization we believe in freedom and safety for all, in Palestine and in our communities here in Maryland. **HB409 would end the practice in Maryland of automatically charging children as adults for all 14- to 15-year-olds and most 16- to 17-year-olds**. We believe HB409 is what's best for Maryland and our communities.

- **Treating children as adults in criminal justice and carceral systems is a violation of international law and human rights.** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ says every child — every human under the age of 18 — must be treated by legal systems and procedures specifically for children, be detained or imprisoned separately from adults and only as a last resort for the shortest time possible, and be treated with humanity and respect.
- The United States, like Israel, has inherited structures of settler colonialism, in which **criminal justice systems function as mechanisms of control and supremacy, enforced differently on different populations**. In Maryland, Black children are more likely to be charged as adults and more likely to receive harsher sentences compared to white counterparts.²
- We know that in Palestine, here in Maryland, and everywhere, **incarceration, state violence, and the inhumane treatment of children does not make our communities safer**. Research shows the automatic charging of youth as adults in the United States does not decrease youth crime or reduce recidivism³. Instead, it destabilizes our communities⁴, while exposing children to harm, abuse, and trauma.

In this time when respect for basic human rights and dignity are being threatened here in the USA and around the world, Maryland should be standing up and setting an example of a different way. Instead, we have sent more children to adult court automatically than any other state but Alabama⁵. It's crucial that Maryland take a stand for democracy and humane legal systems. **It is time we end the shameful practice of automatic charging**, and continue work to end the treatment of children as adults in our criminal justice systems.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

² Derrell Frazier, We Must End the Automatic Charging of Youth as Adults in Maryland. <https://thenext100.org/we-must-end-the-automatic-charging-of-youth-as-adults-in-maryland/>

³ Lila Kazemian, Pathways to Desistance From Crime Among Juveniles and Adults: Applications to Criminal Justice Policy and Practice, Nov. 2021, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/301503.pdf>

⁴ Justice Policy Institute, The Child Not the Charge: Transfer Laws Are Not Advancing Public Safety. <https://justicepolicy.org/research/reports-2020-the-child-not-the-charge-transfer-laws-are-not-advancing-public-safety/>

⁵ Maryland Office of Public Defender, End the Automatic Charging of Children as Adults.

https://c026acbc-bc5d-4cef-8584-0a0bde77d83b.filesusr.com/ugd/8cb54c_9460bce1042a4eeccbcb1b7e17e6f715.pdf