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HB 389 - Juveniles - Detention and Confinement - Limitations on Juvenile Contact With Incarcerated Adults – Support – February 3, 2026

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

As a youth adjudicated as an adult and having spent several years engaged in counseling at-risk and delinquent youth as well as being currently engaged in reentry services for returning citizens, I feel compelled to share the irreparable harm of juvenile offenders being in contact with adult offenders.

I entered the infamous Baltimore City Jail in January of 1980 a week after my 16th birthday. Assuming that I would be separated from the adults, I did not worry until I was ordered to follow the men onto a tier and instructed to enter a darkened cell with an adult stranger. He only spoke after another adult managed to take my wristwatch from the other side of the bars. He said, “I would have warned you, but there are some things you have to learn on your own.”

I whimpered that first night of 42 consecutive years with the realization that I would not fare well in that environment. I was not yet big and seasoned as my so-called peers. I experienced and witnessed the worst that juveniles face in adult facilities. How could I be expected to defend myself from the influences, fears, alienation, humiliation, preying, and harshness of the perverse grown-up world? Why should any juvenile be subject to such fates.

I was stolen from, robbed, beaten up, ostracized, humiliated, preyed upon, propositioned for sex in exchange for safety. I barely escaped from being raped. I have held and served drugs and kept stashes of weapons for older detainees who I believed cared about me.

I have witnessed the aftermath of children having their manhood taken, being taught to attack stitching codefendants, attempting suicide, learning how to be better criminals, etc. I have had friends, juveniles like me, who became gang leaders, drug addicts, and boytoys. I know kids who eventually grow up in prison to die horrible deaths, who have become institutionalized, whose records are so bad that they have no chance of early release.

I believe that -if implemented properly- SB0296 can prevent some of the harms juvenile offenders face when exposed to incarcerated adults. Thus, I support SB0296 and urge this honorable committee to vote favorably.