



**TOWN OF RISING SUN**  
Office of the Mayor  
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**Travis Marion, Mayor**

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**February 11, 2026**

Maryland House Judiciary Committee  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

We are writing to respectfully express our opposition to House Bill 409, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act. While we recognize the importance of continually evaluating and improving Maryland's juvenile justice system, we have significant concerns that this legislation, as drafted, may create unintended consequences that negatively impact public safety, accountability, and community confidence in the justice system.

House Bill 409 would substantially change how serious offenses committed by juveniles are charged by expanding juvenile court jurisdiction and limiting circumstances in which certain cases may be heard in adult courts. Although rehabilitation is an essential goal, there are instances involving violent or serious criminal behavior where adult-level accountability remains appropriate. Weakening long-standing statutory thresholds risks placing individuals accused of the most serious offenses into a system that may not be adequately equipped to address the gravity of those crimes or ensure public safety.

The bill also increases discretion without establishing sufficiently clear and consistent public safety standards. While discretion can play an important role in individualized justice, expanding it without firm statutory guidance may lead to inconsistent outcomes across jurisdictions and create uncertainty for victims, law enforcement, and the public. Clear and predictable laws are especially critical in cases involving violent conduct.

Additionally, there is concern that limiting adult charging options may reduce deterrence for older juveniles who commit serious or repeat offenses. The juvenile justice system has important rehabilitative tools, but it also has inherent limitations regarding length of confinement and long-term supervision. In certain cases, those limitations may not align with the need for accountability or the protection of the broader community.

We are also concerned about the potential impact on victims and their families. Retaining serious offenses exclusively within the juvenile system can reduce transparency, limit access to information, and undermine confidence that justice has been fully served. Any reform to the juvenile justice system should ensure that victims' rights and perspectives remain a central consideration.

Reform of the juvenile justice system is necessary and worthwhile, but it must be balanced and carefully structured. Legislation should promote rehabilitation while maintaining accountability, provide discretion while preserving clear standards, and pursue reform without compromising public safety. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 409 in its current form.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Travis Marion".

**Mayor Travis Marion**

Town of Rising Sun

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F.D. Peterson Jr." with a stylized flourish.

**Chief F.D. "Chip" Peterson Jr.**

Chief of Police, Town of Rising Sun