

## **House Bill 409 Testimony**

### **Maryland General Assembly, 2026 Legislative Session**

Madam Chair and Madam Vice Chair, thank you for the opportunity to address the Judiciary Committee this afternoon regarding House Bill 409, Juvenile Court Jurisdiction (Youth Charging Reform Act). I strongly oppose House Bill 409.

This bill is dangerous, misguided, and puts ideology ahead of public safety. It weakens accountability for the most serious violent crimes committed by juveniles, including offenses that would carry a life sentence if committed by an adult.

The juvenile justice system was never designed to handle murder, attempted murder, rape, or other extreme acts of violence. House Bill 409 ignores that reality and expands juvenile court jurisdiction far beyond its intended purpose. That is a reckless gamble with the safety of our communities.

This legislation also sends a deeply troubling message to crime victims and their families. It tells them that the harm done to them matters less than the age of the offender. Victims deserve justice, not policy experiments that minimize violent crime or reduce consequences for those responsible.

Accountability matters. Consequences matter. Deterrence matters. House Bill 409 undermines all three, in my opinion.

At a time when Maryland continues to struggle with violent crime, this bill moves us in the wrong direction. It creates confusion for law enforcement and prosecutors and erodes public confidence in the justice system.

Rehabilitation is important, but it cannot come at the expense of public safety or victim rights. There must be a clear line for the most violent offenses, and House Bill 409 erases that line.

As Sheriff, my duty is to protect law-abiding citizens, support victims, and ensure dangerous individuals are held accountable. House Bill 409 fails on all fronts.

I urge lawmakers to reject this bill and refocus their efforts on crime prevention, early intervention, and meaningful reform, without sacrificing accountability for the most serious crimes.

Public safety must come first.

Respectfully,

Sheriff Matt Crisafulli

Worcester County Sheriff