

## **MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM**

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Luke Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee  
DATE: February 21, 2019

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Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) strongly supports HB 606 seeking to bring the tools of Maryland's Justice Reinvestment process more directly to benefit our Juvenile Justice System.

While not representing the Maryland Court system, I can make reference to my experience of nearly 8 years as a Circuit Court Juvenile Master and 12 years as a Juvenile Administrative Judge:

In that time, it always was unmistakably clear to me that Juvenile personnel and administration were committed to the welfare of our youth and very busily worked to handle individual cases. But, the policies which have driven the system sometimes seemed more driven by trends and grants than by actual evidence-based studies.

Notably, over the years, the Juvenile Services Administration (or Department of Juvenile Services) supported: Juvenile Boot Camps, "Scared Straight" programs and DWI-interventions similarly designed to impose a kind of shock therapy to name a few. With the passage of several years and actual studies to show the impact on juveniles, each of these programs was found to be counter-productive and discontinued. On other occasions, well-functioning programs were discontinued when grant funding expired.

The reality is that juvenile administrators and workers, in the course of their work, often become too busy to pursue statistical research and are at the mercy of whatever group offers presentations at a training conference.

With Justice Reinvestment, the State can take the time and get neutral, evidence-based consultation that could assist in a comprehensive review of our Juvenile System to evaluate the parts of the system that work most effectively, those that don't, and to receive recommendations of how we might adapt to more effective systems.

Generally, it is well-recognized that community-based and family-involved treatment works more effectively than isolating detention and commitment, except when no less restrictive alternative may work due to safety concerns. Justice Reinvestment, by seeking more effective community & family-based treatment, also might help to save the State taxpayer funds, since detention and commitment resources cost much more.

For all these reasons, MAJR strongly urges adoption of HB 606.

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*NOTE: Phil Caroom offer this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform executive committee and not on behalf of the Maryland Judiciary.*