

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



To: Chair Sandy Bartlett and Judiciary Committee members
From: Bill Carlson and Jenny Zito, MAJR Executive Committee
Subject: **FAV - HB0626 - Juveniles - Custodial Interrogation of Minors - Admissibility of Statements**

February 19, 2026

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR - www.ma4jr.org) supports HB0626, a bill to limit the admissibility of statements made by juveniles when law enforcement officers intentionally used information they know to be false in order to elicit the statements.

Interrogation procedures in most states allow the interrogators to lie to suspects, and this practice can include false statements that someone else has implicated the suspect or that there was DNA evidence at the crime scene. The practice of deception has been shown to be a frequent contributing factor to the false confessions of juveniles that have later been exonerated because of DNA evidence or the confession of the actual perpetrator. One study reports the rate of false confessions by juveniles (42%) to be three times higher than the rate for adults (13%); according to an NIH publication, 94% of confession experts recognize youth as a risk factor for false confessions. See *Youth as a Risk Factor for False Confession*, NIH Library of Medicine, 6/16/2020.

A famous case in New York state in 1989 was the false confessions of five black juveniles, now known as the Exonerated Five and previously known as the Central Park Five, under deceptive interrogation practices. Thirteen years later a known rapist confessed to the crime and his DNA was found to match the DNA of the rape kit sample. California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Oregon, and Utah have all enacted laws prohibiting police from using deceptive interrogation tactics on minors. It is time for Maryland to join these states by passing HB 0626. Links to the bills from states and a synopsis of their effects can be found at [this link](#).

HB0626 is an excellent enhancement to the 2022 Child Interrogation Protection Act (CIPA), which MAJR supported. We support the provision in HB0626 that make minors' statements inadmissible if interrogators were intentionally deceptive and the provision under which statements can be used if shown by clear and convincing evidence that they were actually voluntary.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible, evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation and urges the committee to give HB0626 a favorable report.

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