

[email to supporters]

Let's narrow adult charges for Maryland youth to the most serious crimes!

How do we treat our children who are accused of a crime? Current law permits prosecutors to automatically charge too many children as adults for more than 33 offenses, even though reliable scientific studies show there is a better way. SB0323 – the **Youth Charging Reform Act** – would reduce those chargeable directly in adult court to a smaller number (murder, serious sex offenses, and carjacking) and to those previously convicted of a serious crime in adult court.

Many problems result from Maryland's charging of juveniles in adult-court:

- 1) Most charged and held in adult detention centers become dropouts and have increased crime rates.
- 2) Yet Maryland studies show 87% of those top charges end up being dismissed!
- 3) Especially harmful is the disparate racial treatment as 80% of youth charged as adults in Maryland are African-Americans.
- 4) Because adult courts move more slowly than juvenile courts, youth in adult detention facilities spend much more time in these harmful environments – at greater taxpayer expense! It is estimated SB0323 could save taxpayers nearly \$20 million per year.

The U.S. Supreme Court recognizes that different standards must apply to juveniles in comparison to adults. Other states have modernized their laws accordingly. But, in Maryland, more juveniles end up in Maryland prisons than any other U.S. state, except for Alabama.

What can you do to help? You have been selected to take action because your senator is a member of the Judicial Proceedings committee.

Please use the link below to contact your State Senator and ask them, please, to vote in support of SB0323!

[email to legislator]

As your constituent it is important to me that you support SB0323 to reduce the inappropriate prosecution of many juveniles as adults!

Both U.S. Supreme Court rulings and nationwide scientific studies* say charging juveniles as adults is bad policy. Adult prison makes juveniles more, not less, likely to commit later violent offenses. And it doesn't deter new offenses by other juveniles, according to a 2007 nationwide study by the U.S. Department of Justice and Centers for Disease Control. Yet, except for Alabama, no other U.S. state shamefully sends more of

its youth to adult prison than Maryland.

It is also important to note that SB0323 does ***not*** preclude handling cases when appropriate for adult court. The most serious charges against 16 and 17 year olds (murders, sex offenses, and carjacks) still can be filed in adult court. And prosecutors can request a 'waiver' where a juvenile court judge, after a full evaluation and hearing, may decide to assign appropriate cases to adult court.

Still more problems result from the current system:

1) Most so charged and held in adult detention centers become dropouts with increased crime rates.

2) Maryland studies show 87% of those top charges end up being dismissed!

3) Especially harmful is the disparate racial treatment – as 80% of youth charged as adults in Maryland are African-Americans.

4) Because adult courts move more slowly than juvenile courts, youth in adult detention facilities spend much more time in these harmful environments – at greater taxpayer expense!

Please vote to support SB 323 in the Senate JPR committee! Let's allow our juvenile justice system to handle more of the juvenile cases that are appropriate for them!

* See the testimony of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender:

https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2022/jud/1m_S2bYH1dgd_8OdxJN1khM6bmq_1_hxz.pdf

MAJR is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer 501(c)4 organization of more than 1800 Marylanders and over 50 endorsing organizations in every part of the state who advocate for evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. We support effective alternatives to incarceration, policies to address inequities, and efforts to allow citizens returning from prison to lead productive lives.
<http://www.ma4jr.org>