



Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

February 14, 2023

Written Testimony in Support of SB292

Senator William C. Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Smith:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (MC CJJ) on Senate Bill 292, "Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking – Safe Harbor and Service Response."

MC CJJ was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive, County Council and the Juvenile Court on matters concerning youth justice. Our work includes gathering and disseminating information from public and private agencies serving youth, monitoring youth justice programs and services, visiting facilities, closely following relevant state and local legislation, and making recommendations regarding youth needs.

The MC CJJ strongly supports Maryland Senate Bill 292. This bill provides essential protections to minors who are victims of sex or human trafficking by prohibiting trafficked minors from being placed in juvenile detention or being prosecuted if they committed an offense as a direct result of being a victim of sex trafficking or being a victim of human trafficking.

Far too often, the judicial system penalizes minors who have been exploited, without consideration given to the awful abuse they endured as a result of their trafficking. Girls in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately victims of sexual violence.¹ Approximately 73 percent of all juvenile justice involved girls, nationally, have histories of physical and sexual abuse.² The juvenile justice system often fails to address and, instead, exacerbates the trauma that caused the girls to be arrested in the first place, with some experiencing new incidents of abuse while locked up.³

¹ Malika Saada Saar, Rebecca Epstein, Lindsay Rosenthal, and Yasmin Vafa, "The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story" (Human Rights Project for Girls, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, Ms. Foundation for Women, 2015): 7, [The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story \(georgetown.edu\)](https://www.georgetown.edu/news/the-sexual-abuse-to-prison-pipeline-the-girls-story).

² Francine Sherman, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Pathways to Juvenile Justice Reform: Detention Reform and Girls Challenges and Solutions (2005).

³ Saar, et al, 12.

No child should be imprisoned as a direct consequence of their victimization. Rather, they should be treated as the victims that they are and provided resources and services to help them.

This bill would serve to protect vulnerable children by preventing child trafficking victims from becoming trapped in the legal system. It is an important step to take towards ending the sexual abuse to prison pipeline. We strongly urge you to support this bill and strongly urge a favorable Committee report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kevin Redden, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

