



Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

March 29, 2021

HB 315

Chairman Bill Ferguson
H-107 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Ferguson:

The Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (MC CJJ) is writing in support of HB 315 – Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act.

MC CJJ was established to advise the Montgomery County Executive, County Council and the Juvenile Court on matters concerning juvenile justice. Our work includes gathering and disseminating information from public and private agencies serving youth, monitoring the Juvenile Justice System, visiting facilities, and closely following State and County legislative proposals affecting juveniles. MC CJJ is comprised of citizen members who serve three-year terms without compensation, and agency members that includes Child Welfare, State's Attorney's Office, Office of the Public Defender, Montgomery County Police, Montgomery County Public schools, and Department of Juvenile Services.

The MC CJJ supports Maryland Senate Bill 136 and House Bill 315 - the Juvenile Interrogation Protective Act. This legislation will require Maryland law enforcement officers to give actual notice to a child's parent, guardian, or custodian prior to interrogating the child and ensure each child consults with counsel prior to any waiver of the child's rights.

The current practice of interrogating children without counsel or guardian notification only heightens the chance of a false confession, enabling the actual perpetrators to wander the streets. In any event, the likelihood of a false confession is too high to forgo procedural safeguards.

If we wish for Maryland to have a fair and equitable justice system, we must ensure that youth are not coerced and incarcerated simply because they are children and do not understand their constitutional rights. The Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act would better protect children's constitutional rights and better meet their needs.

We strongly urge you support this bill and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Jennison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Jennison, Chair