



Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

March 3, 2022

Senator William C. Smith Jr.
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for Senate Bill 691

Dear Chair William C. Smith:

The Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (MC CJJ) is writing in strong support of SB691 – Juvenile Justice Reform.

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 juvenile justice programs and services, visiting facilities, closely following relevant State and local legislation, and making recommendations regarding juvenile needs. MC CJJ is composed of appointed, volunteer citizen members, and agency members that include the Child Welfare Services Program, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender, the Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.

The MC CJJ strongly supports Maryland Senate Bill 691. This legislation will raise the minimum age for children to be subject to court jurisdiction, put in place developmentally appropriate time limitations on probation, remove barriers to diversion to allow for more restorative measures, and ban child incarceration for low-level offenses.

There is currently no minimum age for being arrested in Maryland. Children under the age of 12 have been found to have a significantly poorer understanding of legal system, poorer reasoning and less able to help in their own defense. This legislation will raise the minimum age to 13. Further, 75% of the 1,472 children under the age of 13 who were arrested in Maryland in 2020 were Black or Hispanic. The vast majority of kids 12 and under who are arrested do not end up on probation or committed, so they are not ultimately deemed a public safety risk, but they can be traumatized and stigmatized by being arrested.

Passing SB691 will bring Maryland a step closer to protecting the human rights of some of its most vulnerable young people. We urge that you support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support this bill and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Jennison, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

Tracey Friedlander

Tracey Friedlander, Vice-Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice

