

February 14, 2021

Beverly Howard
222 Auburn Station Drive
Auburn, GA 30011

**Testimony in Support of SB494
Juveniles Convicted as Adults – Sentencing – Limitations and Reduction
(Juvenile Restoration Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Good afternoon,

Chairman Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Thank for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for Senate Bill 494.

My name is Beverly Howard, I strongly support SB494 Relating to Juveniles Convicted as Adults – Sentencing – Limitations and Reduction (Juvenile Restoration Act), Maryland courts should consider mitigating circumstances before imposing the hardest possible penalty for juveniles.

Unfortunately, we live with the trauma of losing my niece, and my son committing a crime.

In 1997, my 13 years old niece LaKisha was stabbed to death in front of her mother, by a 14 year old girl. LaKisha was on her way to get her picture taken for a special academic program.

My son was incarcerated in 2004 at the age of 16 years old and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. He acknowledges his crime, demonstrates rehabilitation and deserves a second chance.

In October 2019, the Maryland Parole Commission recommended him for parole. To date there is no future communication on the status of his case. So we wait, hopefully, not another 3-4 years, since this appears to be the norm in Maryland.

When we describe our criminal justice system as an enormous machine – one designed to convey young black and brown, men and women into prison and keep them there no matter what age.

Unlike our neighbors in West Virginia, Virginia, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia, Maryland has yet to end the practice of sentencing children to die in prison, it is unjust.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled it is unconstitutional to impose a life sentence on youthful offenders, and I echo the Supreme Court on this issue. We can do better.

Thank you for your time, please vote in favor of SB494.

Thank you,
Beverly Howard