



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0853 - Juvenile Justice Reform Council -
Recommendations
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
on March 3, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Vice chair, and Members of the Committee:

SB 853 seeks to establish best practices regarding the treatment of children subject to Maryland's criminal and juvenile justice systems. This bill is the result of two years of the Juvenile Justice Reform Council's study, discussion, and debate on a wide array of issues facing Maryland's Juvenile Justice system. All of the recommendations included in this legislation were approved with overwhelming bipartisan support - all but one passed unanimously.

To highlight some of the particulars, SB 853 would prohibit the use of detention for technical violations of probation and for certain misdemeanor offenses, in favor of community supervision and/or GPS monitoring devices. It would also require courts to review the detention status of

juveniles every 14 days pre-trial. The legislation also provides for informal adjustment as a matter of course in most minor cases, which research has shown can be extremely effective in preventing recidivism. Lastly, the bill outlines reporting requirements for the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services and the Department of Juvenile services, and supports the creation of a workgroup to inventory and report on evidence based programming. These recommendations serve to create more conscious consideration of a child's age and development before, during, and after sentencing.

To reach effective solutions, we require targeted, robust data from communities where children are most at-risk to ensure their needs are prioritized. The answer to these issues cannot continue to be putting a disproportionate amount of black and brown children from low income neighborhoods into an already overcrowded system. A system, which is ill-equipped to address children's needs, cannot adequately protect them. If we cannot offer support, protection, and meaningful rehabilitation programs to our youths, we are not only setting them up for failure, we are putting their very lives at risk.

It takes a supportive community to raise a child. In the effort to reduce crime and protect juveniles, every step along the way requires access to comprehensive, concrete data;

open lines of communication across agencies and with the public; and a solid commitment to assessing and rehabilitating juveniles before their day in court. To establish and maintain healthy and nurturing communities for all, it is crucial we provide at-risk children (and their families) with meaningful resources and support programs to ensure their growth on the front end, rather than letting the juvenile and criminal justice systems sort it out when things go wrong.

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on SB 853 from this committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jill P. Carter