



*"Being here for Maryland's Children, Youth, and Families"*

**Testimony submitted to Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 3, 2021**

**Senate Bill 853 – Juvenile Law- Juvenile Justice Reform  
Support**

The Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus (MAYSB), which represents a network of Bureaus throughout the State of Maryland, supports *Senate Bill 853 - Juvenile Law- Juvenile Justice Reform*. Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) are community-based programs that work with youth and their families to decrease the likelihood of youth involvement or re-involvement with the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS).

SB 853 proposes many changes to how youth enter and move through the juvenile justice system. This testimony will focus on one key aspect of this bill that MAYSB believes is important in diverting youth from involvement with the justice system.

SB 853 will alter provisions of law to establish a minimum age of jurisdiction in Maryland and provide that a child under the age of 13 not be subject to the juvenile court's jurisdiction, nor charged with a crime, except under certain circumstances as outlined in the bill. MAYSB fully supports the research that espouses the use of interventions that are more effective in rehabilitating the offending youth and preventing penetration into the DJS system.

Research shows that effective community programs, like Youth Service Bureaus, are more likely than arrest or institutional confinement to facilitate the healthy development of the involved youth. Evidence-based or best practice services have proven successful in reducing recidivism in the youth who come to the juvenile justice system's attention and diverting youth, including those under age 13, from going deeper into the system. MAYSB believes that the child welfare system or mental health system is a more appropriate service for many young people who have committed a low-level offense.

We request that you give SB 853 a favorable report to establish a minimum age of jurisdiction, acknowledging appropriate developmental guidelines for justice-related youth concerns.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Park, PhD  
MAYSB Chair  
[lpark@greenbeltmd.gov](mailto:lpark@greenbeltmd.gov)