



TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Jill P. Carter

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 3, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 853 – *Juvenile Law – Juvenile Justice Reform*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 853.

Senate Bill 853 reflects several of the recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Reform Commission's Final Report. The Commission was charged with researching best practices regarding the treatment of juveniles who are subject to the criminal and juvenile justice systems and identifying recommendations to limit or otherwise mitigate risk factors that contribute to juvenile contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Senate Bill 853 makes four significant changes to Maryland's current judicial framework for juveniles. It raises the minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction to age 13 with limited exceptions for children aged 10-12; bans the use of juvenile jail for low level offenses; limits the length of probation to be developmentally appropriate; and makes it easier for the Department of Juveniles Services to divert youth out of the legal system.

Punitive policies and programs, particularly if they penalize children with severe sanctions in a process that is misunderstood due to developmental immaturity and thus perceived to be unfair, reinforces delinquent behavior, fails to foster prosocial development, and increases recidivism. Children need to be held accountable for wrongdoing in a fair process that promotes healthy development, reduces recidivism, and improves the potential for positive life outcomes. Adoption of the reforms to the juvenile justice system reflected in Senate Bill 853 will significantly advance the State's commitment to provide a more responsive and effective system for preventing, responding to, and managing juvenile interface with the justice system. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000