

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with the Out for Justice (OFJ). I am a resident of MD District 43. I am testifying **in support of Senate Bill 494**.



This bill provides several important protections for juveniles that are convicted as adults. It prohibits a court from imposing a sentence of life without the possibility of parole, allows a juvenile to request reduced sentencing, and allows a court to impose a sentence less than the minimum term required by law.

In Maryland there are dozens of people convicted of crimes committed as children, who are forced to live their full adult life in prison without parole. Harsh sentences on children that do not offer the possibility of reform are inhumane. Established brain science that shows that juvenile minds are still forming and often lack impulse control, so juveniles are actually most likely to be rehabilitated. Additionally, as Maryland legislators, you should strive to make Maryland a forgiving and rehabilitating state, especially when it comes to those who have decades of live to change and grow.

This is especially true for Black youth, who are sentenced to life without parole at 10 times the rate of white youth. Therefore, reforming juvenile conviction policies is also a way to right the wrongs of structural racism.

This kind of harsh treatment of our children makes all of our communities less safe, not more. Locking up our kids is not a solution to the real problems with safety many of our communities have.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of Senate Bill 494**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rochkind
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore