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**Testimony in Support of HB0409
Juveniles Convicted as Adults – Sentencing – Limitations and Reduction
(Juvenile Restoration Act)
House Judiciary Committee**

Good afternoon,

Chairman Clippenger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. Thank for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for House Bill 0409.

My name is Beverly Howard, I strongly support HB0409 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.

In 2004, at the age of 16 my son was sentence to life (all suspend but 30 years) with the possibility of parole. He is currently in the Roxbury Correctional Institute, last year was his second Parole Hearing and the Commission panel recommended parole release, we have been waiting 11 months for his psychological valuation.

My family has been on both sides of the fence, my 13 year old niece was fatally stabbing by a 13 year old girl and even she deserves a second chance. We are better than our biggest mistake.

Maryland courts prosecute and punish youths based on a system and jails designed for adults. The Supreme Court has prohibited a sentence of life without parole for juveniles and HB0409 offers a second chance, and prohibit a court from imposing a sentence of life without parole on a person who is less than eighteen years of age at the time of the offense was committed.

Additional, it would require a court to consider certain factor when considering a motion for a sentence reductions made by a person who was convicted as an adult for an offense committed while they were a minor. Those factors include but not limited to age, nature of the offense, good behavior, academic achievement, family circumstances and demonstrated rehabilitative nature.

1) CFSY recently published a [Fact Sheet regarding HB0409](#) (please see attached). The statistics are startling. We hope this helps you with your advocacy efforts to ensure that HB0409 passes this session. Some key highlights from the Fact Sheet:

Juvenile Restoration Act (HB0409)

400: Over 400 people who are serving life or life equivalent sentences for crimes they committed as children have already served in excess of 20 years and would be immediately eligible for review under HB0409.

114: 114 of those serving life or life equivalent sentences for crimes committed as youth are 50 years of age or older.

87%: Eight-seven percent of people who will be immediately eligible under HB0409, for crimes they committed as children, are Black.

Unlike our neighbors in West Virginia, Virginia, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia, Maryland has not yet ended the practice of sentencing children to die in prison.

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. It is time for change in Maryland.

Thank you for your time, please vote in favor of HB0409.

Thank you,
Beverly Howard