

Dear Members of the House Judiciary
Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing
Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of white
folks working as part of a multi-racial movement
for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and
Baltimore County. I am a resident of MD District
43. I am testifying **in support of House Bill 409**.



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 currently about 300 people, convicted as juveniles, that will die in prison. Harsh sentences on juveniles 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.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of House Bill 409**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Smeton
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore