



Government Affairs Office
12 West Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
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BILL NO. : **House Bill 409 and Senate Bill 494**

TITLE: Juveniles Convicted As Adults- Sentencing- Juvenile Restoration Action

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

SUBMISSION DATE: March 18, 2021

VERIZON POSITION: **Support**

PURPOSE OF BILL:

This bill authorizes a court, when sentencing a minor convicted as an adult, to impose a sentence less than the minimum term required under law. A court is prohibited from imposing a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole or release on a minor convicted as an adult. The bill also authorizes an individual who was convicted as an adult for an offense committed when the individual was a minor to file a motion with the court to reduce the duration of the sentence; the bill establishes related procedures.

COMMENTS:

Verizon salutes efforts by state legislatures to reform the criminal legal system. Criminal legal system reform is an issue that directly or indirectly impacts millions of Americans in the communities we serve, including our customers, our employees, and their families.

We are proud to support the Juvenile Restoration Act (MD HB409 and MD SB494), which will abolish life without parole as a sentencing option for children and create an opportunity for sentencing review after a person who was sentenced as a child has served 20 years in prison. This constitutes measured, reasonable reform in line with 22 other states that have already abolished life without parole for children. We applaud the Maryland General Assembly for considering these bills and respectfully encourage the legislature to pass the Juvenile Restoration Act and submit the legislation to Governor Larry Hogan for signature.

Juvenile sentencing reform, such as HB409 and SB494, acknowledges the science and body of case law from the United States Supreme Court which makes it abundantly clear that juvenile offenders are fundamentally different from adult offenders. And more importantly, these bills demonstrate an understanding that children have a greater capacity for change; leaving room for children convicted of crimes to lean into an opportunity for a real future. No child is beyond the hope of redemption and becoming a productive citizen in the community.

In 2019, Verizon expanded its pro bono program to include criminal legal issues, supporting work to eliminate the extreme sentencing of juveniles and assisting formerly incarcerated individuals to pursue relief under state laws that permit the sealing or expungement of criminal records. Verizon is also working at both the state and Federal levels and across both sides of the political aisle on criminal legal reform legislation involving juvenile resentencing, expungement, right to counsel, among others.

In addition to advancing criminal legal system reform, Verizon prides itself on being a longstanding leader in diversity and inclusion. We actively promote diversity in both our employees and our suppliers. We know that moving the world forward takes more than the best technology; it takes the best people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. That's why Verizon has been recognized as a top employer for diversity, with a growing list of honors recognizing our commitment to women, people of color, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities and the military.

We thank you for your efforts to bring real and meaningful change now to the criminal legal system.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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