



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 53  
Child Interrogation Protection Act  
January 27, 2022  
Favorable**

Dear Chairman Smith and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in strong support of Senate Bill 53. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders. We urge you to support this legislation as part of our efforts to address discriminatory practices leading to the overincarceration of Black youth and in the state of Maryland and to ensure that everyone in our justice system is treated fairly, equitably, and the kids are provided with rehabilitative services that will help them succeed.

Every day in Maryland, children entangled in the criminal legal system are questioned without a parent being notified or attorney present. Although youth of all races commit offenses at roughly the same rates, African American youth are arrested at much higher rates than any other racial group in this state, and therefore are at particularly high risk of facing police interrogations and coercion. As a result, Black children face criminal charges, prosecution, and incarceration without the basic due process rights that adults are entitled to. We believe any young person facing a police interrogation has the legal right to ask for a lawyer before answering questions and have their guardian notified, SB 53 the Child Interrogation Protection Act will protect those rights.

The Child Interrogation Protection Act will:

- 1) Require law enforcement to make good faith efforts to notify parents or guardians that their child will be subject to interrogation;
- 2) Allow a child to consult with an attorney prior to being interrogated; and

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3) Encourage Maryland courts to adopt age-appropriate language for children to understand their rights.

Adolescent brain development coupled with behavioral psychology and sociological literature on coercive persuasion and interrogation-induced false confessions explain why youth are prone to comply with the requests of authority figures like police or school resource officers (SRO's), making them uniquely vulnerable to coercive interrogation tactics. It is imperative to keep a continued understanding of adolescent brain development and behavior psychology at the forefront of this discourse to ensure we are adequately discussing the dangers of youth interrogations. Further, it is critical to recognize that the goal of interrogations is to elicit incriminating statements, admissions and/or confessions through the use of psychological methods that are explicitly confrontational, manipulative, and suggestive.

Strong Future Maryland urges this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 53.