

Senate Bill 53
Child Interrogation Protection Act
January 27, 2022
Support

Dear Chairman Smith and Honorable Members of the Committee:

As a resident of Baltimore City, who has grandchildren living in both Baltimore County and Harford County, I strongly support Senate Bill 53, the Child Interrogation Protection Act. 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. While I am not a person of color, two of my grandchildren are and it is extremely important to me that my oldest grandson would be treated the same way as my youngest grandson. This bill will make sure that all juveniles have their constitutional rights protected and that their parents know when if they have been taken into custody. Currently black children face criminal charges, prosecution, and incarceration without the basic due process rights that adults are entitled to. I believe any young person facing a police interrogation has the legal right to consult with a lawyer before answering questions and have their guardian notified that they have been taken into custody, 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
- 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. In simple language, it is much easier to get a conviction when you have a confession and interrogators will do almost anything to get one – even if all they are getting is a false confession. **I strongly urge this committee to issue a favorable**

report on SB 53.

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