



STATE OF MARYLAND
JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 53

JUVENILE LAW - JUVENILE INTERROGATION PROTECTION ACT

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 27, 2022

Submitted by Nick Moroney, director, Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU)

The Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) supports SB 53. The JJMU is an independent state agency in the Attorney General's office. We work to prevent abuse and ensure appropriate services in the deep end of Maryland's juvenile justice system. Our reports are at: <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/pages/jjm/default.aspx>

Police are not required to call parents/guardian or an attorney before a child is interrogated no matter how young the child or how serious the charges. Studies show children do not understand or feel comfortable exercising their due process rights and end up giving them up 90% of the time and make false confessions at rates exponentially higher than adults.

SB 53 will protect children and young people by making sure parents are informed and a public defender has been consulted when young people are taken into custody and before they are questioned or subjected to an interrogation or interview. Such situations can involve an unconscionable misbalance of power as young people face legal jeopardy alone.

Children and young people have not yet developed a sufficient level of self-confidence to defend their best interests in such a predicament. We also know that young people make impulsive decisions and yet we currently leave them alone facing authority figures who can influence, for better or worse, their entire future life and career trajectory. The bill should be supported because it offers a modicum of protection to children and young people in potentially precarious situations and at a time when they most need and are entitled to legal help.

For these reasons, the JJMU supports SB 53 and respectfully urges the committee to give the bill a favorable report.