

Bill Number: HB 698
Scott D. Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Baltimore County
Support

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SCOTT D. SHELLENBERGER,
STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY,
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 698
JUVENILE LAW – JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION – AGE OF CHILD

I write in favor of House Bill 698 that would expand the jurisdiction of the juvenile court to include juveniles who are 11 and 12 years of age.

Currently the law does not allow for juvenile charges against those who commit offense under the age of 13. That means the 12-year-old who took a gun and ammunition to school in Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County would not face any consequences or likely get much needed help. How about the middle schooler in Charles County who was caught with a stun gun in school? Now he would not be able to even go to juvenile court to deal with the underlying issues that must be there.

Please remember we are talking about juvenile court where all matters are confidential and treatment and help is the main focus. It is also the place that does not have a record that will follow you around for life. If a 12-year-old brings a gun to school that child needs help and it is the juvenile court that is best able to give it. Do not leave it to the school system alone to be the ones who have to solve this problem.

Expanding the juvenile system to include 11 and 12 years old who commit crimes makes sense in this day and age.

I urge a favorable report.