

To: Delegates Clippinger, Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Rev. Dr. Marlon B. Tilghman, Pastor of Ames UMC Bel, Co-Chair within BRIDGE Maryland, Inc., Transformational Justice, and Member of the Maryland Youth Justice Coalition.
Dual Residencies of District 44 & District 34B

Dear Delegates,

King David laments to God: *How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?* Psalm 13:1-2

In the last two years, it felt like the Maryland State legislature was listening to the citizens that the dehumanization of Black people in a long history of Maryland's judicial racism was coming to an end. The Human Rights for Kids shared a study that this country violated more human rights violations against children than any other country; and that Maryland was one of the worst in America. I'm happy to say that when they conducted their study again in 2022 and after the sweeping legislation that took place just last year, Maryland went from the worst state to the most improved state and perhaps the best state in how we treat our children in the judicial system.

Any lawmaker that would entertain either HB698 or HB753 which would roll back the clock on the progress that has yet to be revealed says to the faith community that perhaps you weren't listening at all. It's time for faith leaders to speak truth to power and today, speaking for myself, if any of these bills leave this committee it's telling the citizens of Maryland that we're not even gonna give the laws that were just passed a chance to heal this state.

We've made this scientifically clear, theologically clear, and sociologically clear. HB698 & HB753 wants to reclassify children as adults so that they can punish them like adults. They use terms like large, strong, highly intelligent as triggers in your minds to justify treating children like adults. Don't believe the hype, instead trust the science and listen to the citizens who voted for you and vote against these bill. How long will the enemy of righteousness triumph over our most vulnerable population? Our children need care and not cages. **We employ you to vote against:** rolling back the minimum age law HB698 and against lowering the age for gun prosecutions HB753.