

# Pass the Youth Charging Reform Act

[SB323/HB409](#)



Everyone benefits when kids accused of breaking the law start in the juvenile justice system – and a judge decides if they should be tried as an adult.

## QUICK FACTS

- **In FY'25, Maryland charged more than 1,000 youth as if they were adults.** The vast majority were charged automatically, based solely on the charge at the time of arrest, and then sent to juvenile court after a judge reviewed their case.
- **Maryland sends more youth, ages 14-17, to adult court – automatically, without input from a judge – than any other state except Alabama.**
- **The first bill on automatic charging was introduced in 2013.** Since that time, three commissions appointed by three different Governors have recommended ending automatic charging, including the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform, Emerging & Best Practices (CJJR) created by the General Assembly in their [2025 Commission report](#).

MYJC believes all youth cases should start in juvenile court. This bill offers a compromise to limit, but not end, the use of automatic charging. MYJC supports this compromise.

## WHAT THE BILL DOES

The bill requires 16- and 17-year olds charged with 12 offenses—including murder and carjacking – begin their cases in adult court. Current law encompasses 33 offenses. The other charges will now start in juvenile court. It also ends the automatic adult charging of 14- and 15-year olds, starting all cases in juvenile court.

## WHAT THE BILL DOES NOT DO

**The YCR Act does NOT prevent teenagers from being tried in adult court.**

Prosecutors can still ask for cases to be moved from juvenile to adult court and Judges will make the final decision.

**The YCR Act does NOT release teens charged with serious crimes back into the community.**

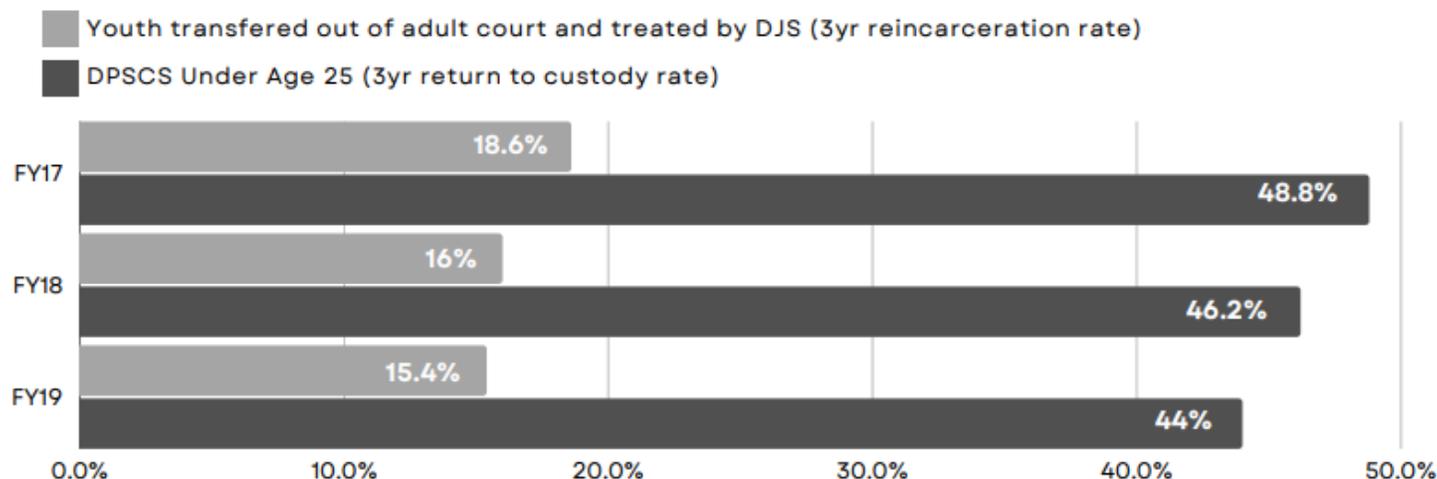
Juvenile Judges and Magistrates will continue to decide, on a case-by-case basis, who is detained or released or before trial.

## WHO SUPPORTS THE BILL?

The Maryland Youth Justice Coalition's 26 organizations, and many partners support the 2026 effort to limit automatic charging. For a full list of supporters, visit [mdyouthjustice.org](http://mdyouthjustice.org) or scan the QR code →



## YOUTH SERVED BY THE JUVENILE SYSTEM HAVE BETTER OUTCOMES



Sources: [mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting\\_material/2023/jpr%20-%20133190439744448914%20-%20Briefing%20Materials.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting_material/2023/jpr%20-%20133190439744448914%20-%20Briefing%20Materials.pdf)  
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## BETTER POLICY, MORE EFFECTIVE & SAVES MONEY

- Starting juvenile cases in juvenile court saves time and money. **Less than 13% of youth charged in adult court end up with an adult criminal conviction.**
- The automatic filing process is extremely expensive & time consuming, **costing over \$20 million a year.**
- Research shows that providing timely, appropriate rehabilitative services to youth is associated with better outcomes, including lower recidivism, compared with extended detention or delayed support.

## REDUCES CRIME AND INCREASES SAFETY

**Adult charging results in increased physical violence, sexual violence, and isolation.** Research shows that youth charged as adults are at increased risk of physical and sexual assault and isolation from their families, which may contribute to future criminality. **Reducing automatic charging of kids as adults protects kids and improves their long term outcomes.**

## ADDRESSES RACIAL DISPARITIES

- Over 77% of youth charged in adult court in Maryland are Black.
- **Black youth are more likely to be sent to adult prison and receive longer sentences than their white counterparts for similar offenses.**
- Implicit bias research shows that Black kids are more likely to be seen and treated as adults than white kids.

### Questions?

Contact [mdyouthjusticecoalition@gmail.com](mailto:mdyouthjusticecoalition@gmail.com)

### Want to learn more?

[mdyouthjustice.org](https://mdyouthjustice.org)

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Baltimore Jewish Council  
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