



VISION - *BRIDGE Maryland sees the state challenged by a history of inequity but engaged in community organizing for a more just tomorrow.*

MISSION - *BRIDGE Maryland uses intentional relationship building, organizing and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world.*

There Ought to Be A Law

So many times, we assume there are laws in place that address some basic needs in our communities. We watch crime shows and think that the words coming from the mouths of performers are actual laws. Viewers falsely think that the crime solving technologies used on television shows like *CSI* are real. Not so.

HB624/SB593 Child Interrogation Protection Act “Protect Our Minors”

Fewer than half of states in this country have laws which require that a parent or guardian be notified once their child is taken into the custody of law enforcement and that an attorney must be present while the minor is being interviewed/interrogated. HB624/SB593 - ***Protect Our Minors*** would require law enforcement agents to:

- 1) Mirandize a minor using standardized age appropriate language.
- 2) Notify a parent/guardian immediately when their minor is in custody.
- 3) Require that a minor speak with legal counsel prior to custodial interrogation.

In many households, children are taught to trust and respect authority - and they should. However, there are too many instances in which unaccompanied minors have given statements resulting in charges for crimes they did not commit.

In the Netflix documentary “*When They See Us*,” five young African American boys in New York were convicted of the violent rape of a white woman in Central Park. After several years of incarceration, they were found to be innocent. While incarcerated, some were brutally raped,

beaten and terrorized.

Data from the National Registry of Exonerations shows that 36% of exonerees who were under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged offense had falsely confessed.

Delegate Brooke Lierman (one of the bill's sponsors) reported that in 2019, there were 3,000 in-school arrests of children in the State of Maryland. Schools are part of the pipeline to prisons. HB624 / SB593 would help to address this problem.

We can protect our children by teaching minors to respect law enforcement. Then, ask for their parent/guardian and attorney **AND say nothing until they arrive. *Protect Our Minors*** will make sure that EVERY juvenile has this same protection.

BRIDGE Maryland, Inc. also offers this moral imperative from member faith institutions.

Minors are vulnerable, influenced by authority, immature and at risk of emotional cultural and situation trauma well into adulthood. Our sacred texts teach us that children are an inheritance from God (Psalm 127:3-5). There is still adult responsibility needed, even in the presence of wrongdoing and chastisement (Proverbs 17:6). Intergenerational value in our children must be recognized and respected; thus, an adult must be present. Likewise, God wants our children treated justly (Exodus 22:22-23) and to treat children in callous disposable ways affects a child's future and offends the Creator of us all (Matthew 18:10).