

Unlikely alliance: Rural conservative and urban progressive call to amend Maryland's contentious Child Interrogation Protection Act

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (TND) — Changing Maryland's embattled Child Interrogation Protection Act seems to be uniting policymakers that otherwise would be strange bedfellows.

Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott and Carroll County Delegate Christopher Tomlinson are far opposites in both political ideology and the demographic they represent.

Del. Tomlinson, a freshman state legislator, represents some of the most rural parts of the state. As a previous state Republican Party leader, Del. Tomlinson was an avid conservative who wanted to take 'main street' values to Annapolis.

Mayor Brandon Scott has been a fixture in Baltimore City elected office for over a decade. Having served as a leader in the city's Young Democrats, he first came to office as a City Council member focused on social justice reform and furthering progressive ideas in Maryland's largest city.

Both agree there is a problem with the state's controversial [Child Interrogation Protection Act](#).

Passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2022, the law prohibits police or the courts from questioning juveniles about crimes they are accused of committing or may have key knowledge about. The law does not permit waiving this prohibition.

The act also seeks to release the child back to their parent or guardian as quickly as possible. Only in extreme cases, the new law authorizes the child's release to a detention or shelter care facility guided by the courts.

Ice Act Under this law, police never have the [ability to question](#) juvenile suspects or witnesses, according to Baltimore County State's Attorney Scott Shellenberger.

Even if the child wants to talk to the police and even if their parents want the child to talk to the police, they cannot do so under the law," Baltimore County State's Attorney Shellenberger told Fox45 News in July.

Mayor Brandon Scott calls for an overhaul of the juvenile justice system (WBFF)

On Thursday, Mayor Brandon Scott joined prosecutors and policymakers around the state by voicing his opposition to the law on WBAL NewsRadio.

Listen, you already know what I'm going to say here, [radio host's name], I don't care if Billy Murphy was my attorney, if my father said I had to talk to the police, I had to talk to the police," Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott said on WBAL NewsRadio on Thursday.

During the radio interview, Scott suggested both child and parent's rights can be protected in the interest of public safety.

That's the reality of the world; and, we understand about protections for folks, but we cannot be at a place where we are allowing parents to be overruled by anybody," Mayor Brandon Scott explained during a WBAL NewsRadio interview.

Carroll County Del. Chris Tomlinson agrees with Scott that parental rights are paramount.

Mayor Scott is spot on, we should not allow the Office of the Public Defender to overrule the parents' wishes," Maryland Delegate Chris Tomlinson told Fox45 News.

Tomlinson sees the child interrogation law as the state's attempt to infringe on parents' ability to raise their children.

Across the country right now, we are seeing an attack on parental rights," Del. Chris Tomlinson explained to Fox45 News. "As someone who is about to have their first child in four weeks, I will never let the government tell me how to raise my child."

Fox45 News reached out to Mayor Brandon Scott's office to seek further comment about his thoughts on the interrogation law. Scott's office did not immediately respond to comment requests.

Following Scott's Thursday radio interview, Fox45 News reached out to the bill's chief architect, Sen. Jill Carter of Baltimore City.

Sen. Jill Carter, D-Baltimore City, defended the current juvenile crime laws amid criticism from several prosecutors and police departments. (WBFF)

Carter conceded there could be some modifications made to the juvenile law. She maintained the law's original purpose was not sinister.

There could be some tweeks in the [child interrogation] law, but we are not going to throw the whole law out," Maryland Senator Jill Carter told Fox45 News in a heated phone interview Friday. "Who other than a lawyer can ensure child's rights are protected?"

The long-time Baltimore legislator expressed she felt unjustly vilified for writing the law. She told Fox45 News she felt the media is incorrectly blaming her for the surge in the state's violent juvenile crime spree.

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Sen. Carter told Fox45 News that she will continue to fight for what she believes is the constitutional rights for all Marylanders.

Children have rights that are recognized in all other states. Why should Maryland be an outlier of constitutionally protected rights,” Sen. Carter questioned to Fox45 News.

Carter did not want to directly respond to Mayor Scott’s comments on parental rights. Instead, she challenged state prosecutors to prove the law is harming their ability to hold juveniles accountable.

We are taking a premise of what prosecutors are saying is true,” Sen. Carter stated to Fox45 News. “I’m not accepting what they are saying is true. I challenge them to prove to us the need to change the law, first.”

Many prosecutors have called on the General Assembly to convene an emergency Special Session to address juvenile crime.

Governor Wes Moore and General Assembly leadership have stated they do not believe a Special Session is needed.