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The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Announces Launch of Commission on Juvenile Justice, Reforms Detention Policies

Baltimore, Maryland – The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services today announced the launch of the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging Best Practices, a statewide commission to review and report on juvenile services, facilities, and programs in Maryland. In parallel, the department also announced reforms to its detention policies and launched new supportive programming for justice-involved youth.

“The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services is focused on promoting accountability, rehabilitation, and preventing justice-involved young people from reoffending,” said Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Secretary Vincent Schiraldi. “Using a data-informed approach and in partnership with our legislative leaders, law enforcement, community leaders, and other system stakeholders, we are committed to working with the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform to build safer and stronger communities.”

Authorized by the passage of House Bill 814 and signed into law by Governor Moore in May 2024, the commission reflects the Moore-Miller Administration’s commitment to making Maryland safer by holding accountable and providing comprehensive rehabilitative support for youth who are justice-involved. The commission will be housed within the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy and will hold its first meeting in October.

In addition to reviewing and reporting on juvenile services and facilities, the 26-member commission is charged with reviewing programs to divert children from the juvenile justice system. The commission will also review and report on a number of high-priority juvenile justice policies, including support and programming for girls in the juvenile justice system; the use of child-in-need-of-supervision petitions; the number of petitions authorized or denied by jurisdiction; and wait times for placement of children in facilities.

In parallel with the launch of the commission’s work, the department also announced the following reforms to its detention policies and launch of supportive programming for justice-involved youth:

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- All youth who are referred to the department after being accused of a violent felony and who are not detained will be placed on electronic monitoring prior to their initial court appearance.
- All youth who are already on electronic monitoring and are charged with a violent felony will be detained.
- “CARE”—or Community Assistance for the Release Eligible—is a new program that will work with system-involved youth who are neither detained nor placed on community detention to support them and their families and provide service referrals.
- The Detention Diversion Advocacy Program will support youth who are placed by the courts in the community while their cases are pending with intensive supervision support from credible messengers .

The new supportive programming initiatives build upon the department’s ongoing reforms, including:

Establishment of the Thrive Academy, which is focused on justice-involved youth who are at the highest risk of gun violence. Thrive provides heightened supervision by specialized case managers and life coaches, many of whom have been formerly incarcerated themselves, in addition to a robust range of services, supports, and opportunities to create pathways for success. Maryland is the first juvenile system in the country to launch such a gun violence prevention initiative. Thrive was recognized in August with the prestigious *Inspiration Innovation Award* from the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators.

\$17 million investment in a continuum of community programs for youth. Authorized by the General Assembly for Fiscal Year 2025, the department is investing in a robust array of services, supports and opportunities for youth across the state to assist with rehabilitation and ensure public safety. The new investment marks an increase over the previous administration’s approach, which depleted community programming and under-spent its budget by an average of \$13 million dollars per year.

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