

MARYLAND YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION

March 2025 Newsletter

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JUSTICE COALITION

Welcome to the March MYJC newsletter! Each month we assemble all the latest need-to-know news about MYJC and what's happening for youth across Maryland. Please share your community events, local news, needs, and actions with us by emailing gail@advancemaryland.org.

Share this newsletter with your network and encourage them to sign up to receive their own copy [here](#).

Did you miss our previous newsletters? Find it and all of our newsletters [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

Take Action to help pass SB422 & HB1433!

We have been able to make more strides in getting rid of autocharging children as adults this session than ever before. But we still need to get to the finish line. If you haven't yet, please take a quick minute to fill out this [action alert](#) to make sure your state legislators hear directly from you!

RECAP

It's been a busy session!

On February 17, over a dozen advocacy groups (including MYJC) along with over 300 Marylanders gathered in Annapolis to rally for justice for all. Read statements from group leaders and individuals [in this Maryland Matters article](#). A huge thank you to everyone who showed up and made this rally possible!



Photo: Crowds rally in Annapolis for justice for all.

January 21 was the first reading of SB422, and our hearing in the Senate (SB422) took place on February 4 ([watch it here!](#)). The Judiciary Committee held a [hearing](#) on the House version of the bill (HB1433) on February 26. All three events proceeded seamlessly, and committee members were engaged throughout. Now we're doing everything we can to get the bill on a vote list. Stay tuned for updates!

AHEAD

Open call for individuals and organizations who want to shape the narrative around young people in Maryland. The Youth Rights and Safety Hub launched this month and is an opportunity for state and local organizations who are interested in influencing the narrative about Maryland's youth. The hub is a collaborative space that will provide members with communications resources and training while we work to change and shape the public narrative. [Learn more here.](#) To join, email yrsh@advancemaryland.org.

IN THE NEWS

Advocates argue that charging youth as adults costs Maryland millions. State Public Defender Natasha Dartigue says SB422 “would reduce the Office of the Public Defender’s contractual expenses by about \$1.4 million and the office’s workload by about \$2.6 million.” She also highlights “estimates by the Department of Juvenile Services that that agency would save about \$12.3 million.” [Get the facts and testimonies from WYPR.](#)

Lawmakers continue to debate the sentencing of youth as adults, [according to the Enquirer Gazette.](#) Senator Will Smith argues that SB422 would spare some young defendants from spending weeks or months in the adult system before their charges are dismissed or dropped. Reform advocates say that exposure increases their chances of committing a new and more serious crime in the future.

The Maryland Capital with Jayne Miller Podcast [highlighted](#) the need to pass SB422 and remove autocharging.

Director of Public Policy at Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, Dayvon Love, joined WYPR’s [Mid-Day](#) to share why auto-charging is inefficient, expensive, and needlessly traumatizing to children and their communities.

Human Rights For Kids’ Michael Mendoza shares his own personal experience of being tried as an adult at just 16 years old [in this Baltimore Sun article.](#) By referencing the deaths of Kalief Browder in New York and Kayelyn Drake in Mississippi, Mendoza asks, “will lawmakers in Annapolis act in time to prevent a similar tragedy? Or will we be naming a law in honor of a Maryland child who also didn’t need to die?” Further, “if the law enforcement community recognizes that adult jails and solitary confinement are no place for a child, the Maryland General Assembly should too” by prioritizing the passage of HB1107 and SB827, which would keep children out of adult jails and ban the practice of placing them in solitary confinement.

Former chief judge of the Supreme Court of Maryland Mary Ellen Barbera says the ‘lamentable’ policy of automatically trying children as adults must change. Read all about it in [this Maryland Matters commentary article.](#)

Former OJJDP administrator Liz Ryan shares her thoughts on the need to pass SB422 and calls upon lawmakers to pass this important legislation. [Read the commentary in The Daily Record.](#)

Have an upcoming event you want us to highlight in the April newsletter?

Email gail@advancemaryland.org.

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