

MARYLAND YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION

July/August 2025 Newsletter



Welcome to the July/August 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](#).

RECAP

July Recap

Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) Report Released

The Correctional Ombudsman for Maryland released their first JJMU Report in July detailing issues inside DJS facilities, including reports of staff assaults on children in DJS care. MYJC debriefed these reports over several meetings and released the statement below, which was published in the Baltimore Banner as a [Letter to the Editor](#).

- JJMU Report [here](#)
- DJS Response to JJMU Report [here](#)

MYJC Statement

"The disturbing events described in The Baltimore Banner's coverage of the latest report from the Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit ([Staff failed to prevent sexual activity at youth detention center, watchdog finds, July 30, 2025](#)) underscores, once again, why incarcerating young people should be avoided or used only as a last resort.

Whenever incarceration is utilized for youth, our state should hold the Department of Juvenile Services accountable for ensuring those in state care are safe and

supported while in their custody. Other recent scandals in Maryland — including voluminous charges of sexual assaults in facilities run by the Department of Juvenile Services dating to the 1960s and the rediscovery of a graveyard of children who died at the Cheltenham Youth Detention Center more than 150 years ago — underscore a fundamental truth. Incarceration places young people in danger.

Rather than seeking to avoid it or utilize only as a last resort, today's law enforcement and elected officials calling for more or longer use of detention are knowingly placing youths at risk — and they should be held accountable for their inhumane advocacy. Decades of experience and research have shown that there are almost always better, more effective and more humane alternatives to incarceration, as the latter leads to evident abuses and also greater recidivism. We can, and must, do better.”

Graves Rediscovered Near Site of Maryland Reform School for Black Children

At least 100 mostly unmarked graves, some dating back to the 19th century, have existed outside the Cheltenham Youth Detention Center without recognition. Now, lawmakers like Sen. William C. Smith Jr. and former juvenile services head Vincent Schiraldi are pushing to restore the site and acknowledge its history. Applications for a roadside marker and a \$250,000 state grant are underway. The effort is part of a larger call for reform. Maryland charges more children as adults than nearly any other state, with Black youth disproportionately affected. Covered by the [Washington Post](#). Additional coverage by the [Washington Informer](#), [NPR](#) via All Things Considered, [NBC4 Washington](#), [San Diego Voice & Viewpoint](#), [Black Enterprise](#).

August Recap

MYJC has been closely monitoring the ongoing military takeover of DC, which started based on claims by Trump that crime is out of control, and that teens as young as 14 should be charged as adults. Organizations in MYJC have mobilized to support DC organizations and continue to educate elected officials and the public so they understand the connection between Trump's rhetoric about teenagers and Maryland law that automatically charges youth as adults.

August also saw two great op-eds published regarding the cemetery at Cheltenham:



[Cheltenham's lost graves spark push for juvenile justice reform](#), by Megan Sayles in AFRO



[Unmarked graves of children expose an uncomfortable truth for Maryland](#), by Liz Ryan in Maryland Matters



As summer winds down, our workgroups are transitioning into preparing for the upcoming legislative session. Beginning in September, we will transition from interim planning to action in order to lay the groundwork for a successful legislative session. Each of our summer workgroups will share report backs at our upcoming meetings and they will make recommendations to the coalition on automatic charging, prevention focused legislation and incorporating youth voices.

September 15, 2025: Automatic Charging Workgroup Presentation

September 29, 2025: Prevention Workgroup Presentation

October 13, 2025: Youth Informed Workgroup Presentation

Don't miss these important meetings! We will be making decisions on coalition priorities based on the information presented and may be voting at these meetings.

Remaining 2025 Meeting Schedule:

October 27, 2025

November 10, 2025

November 24, 2025

December 8, 2025

December 22, 2025 (maybe)

IN THE NEWS

Maryland state senator aims to change how juvenile offenders are treated in the state. Senator William Smith visited an overgrown cemetery at the Cheltenham Youth Detention Center, where over 100 Black children from a segregated 19th-century facility are buried in unmarked graves. He highlighted this site as a symbol of Maryland's ongoing racial disparities in juvenile justice. Smith is pushing Senate Bill 422 to raise the age for automatic adult charges from 14 to 16 and reduce the number of offenses eligible for such charges. He argues that treating youth in the adult system is harmful, costly, and ineffective, and calls for both reform and proper recognition of the buried children. Read on in this [NPR Illinois](#) article. Additional coverage by the [Baltimore Sun](#).

Despite Progress, some States Revive Harsh Youth Crime Policies. A Governing article by Liz Ryan and Vincent Schiraldi highlights progress in juvenile justice reform over the past two decades, shifting away from punitive approaches of the 1990s toward more rehabilitative, evidence-based models. While youth incarceration and arrest rates have dropped, the authors warn that some states are reverting to harsher policies in response to recent crime fears. They argue that reforms must remain grounded in research, not political pressure or media-driven panic, to sustain a fair and effective juvenile justice system. Get the full piece from [Vanguard News Group](#).

Baltimore recorded fewest youth homicides in a decade in first half of 2025.

Baltimore has seen less than a dozen youth homicides during the first half of the year in each of the past 11 years, according to Baltimore Police Department data. But the two youth homicides in the first half of this year mark the lowest since at least 2015, the earliest reliable data is available. Read on in the [Baltimore Banner](#).

Maryland judiciary faces pressure over withheld public records. FOX45 News is considering legal action after nearly 200 days without a response to its public records request on juvenile court rulings. More details in this [Baltimore Sun](#) article.

DJS rolls out stricter policy for juveniles committing crimes under monitoring. Under the direction of its new secretary, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services will detain juveniles who commit new offenses while on electronic monitoring. Read the Baltimore Sun article [here](#).

Maryland DJS updates policies governing electronic monitoring of juvenile offenders. The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services updated policies to address youth re-offenders on electronic monitoring. Effective July 3, any youth arrested while wearing an ankle monitor will now be detained until their next court hearing. A DJS officer must also appear in court to provide updates on the youth's monitoring progress. Read more in [this](#) WBAL article and [this piece](#) by the Baltimore Banner.

Baltimore City's 2026 fiscal year budget allocates \$634.4 million to youth programs. The YouthWorks program will receive funding to support 8500 positions for the upcoming summer. Additional funding for the program is available through a partnership with the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund. Operating costs for three new recreation centers at Chick Webb, Parkview, and Gardenville are covered in the budget as well. Read more about the city's \$4.6 billion budget for the 2026 fiscal year in [this](#) article by WJZ News.

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Preschool to Prison" Film Event

September 6, 12–4pm

Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary School,
Jerome McFadden Educational Center
1400 N. Caroline Street Baltimore MD
21213

Join CFCC for a film screening of "Preschool to Prison". Prior to the screening, there will be good food, informative workshops, as well as vendor tables for youth and their families to learn from and enjoy. The film will start around 2:30pm and a panel for Q&A will follow.

The Jerome McFadden Educational Center, LLC, and The Community Group, Inc. present...

PRESCHOOL to Prison

Join the JMEC Strategic Disruptor Initiative and The Community Group for a screening of "Preschool to Prison", with interactive workshops, food, prizes, and a panel discussion

Event Sponsors:

September 6, 2025
12:00PM-4:00PM

Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary School
1400 N. Caroline Street

Sponsors include: JMEC, The Community Group, Keys Empowers, Healthy Lives, University of Maryland, and others.

Maryland Public Defender
Natasha M. Dartigue invites you to

In Defense of Us
Discussions and Community Events

*Steel & Stories:
Her Voice, Her Truth,
Her Fight for Justice.*

Tuesday, September 30, 2025 | 6 pm - 8 pm
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD 20850, USA

View the event live on IG
@MarylandOPD

RSVP HERE
bit.ly/3UQg8hC



In Defense of Us: Steel & Stories: Her Voice, Her Truth, Her Fight for Justice
September 30, 6–8pm
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue Rockville MD 20850

Join OPD for their upcoming panel as part of their In Defense of Us series. The community event will focus on women and girls in the criminal legal system. Click [here](#) to register.

Have an upcoming event you want us to highlight in the September newsletter?
Email gail@advancemaryland.org.

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