

MARYLAND YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION

September 2025 Newsletter



Welcome to the September 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](#).

Not yet a member of MYJC? Email gail@advancemaryland.org today to join.

FEATURED

Our Youth Informed Committee started meeting in July with several coalition member organizations participating. A series of listening sessions with young folks have taken place over the summer and early fall connecting with High Schoolers, YouthWorks participants, and kids who have been through Juvenile Services. We have been asking the same questions throughout related to what they wish policymakers better understood, what they believe they need to thrive, and what they would like to see more or less of in their community. A general report will be shared in October.

RECAP

This month, we've started transitioning from interim planning to action in order to lay the groundwork for a successful legislative session. Both workgroups have shared their recommendations with the full coalition, see their goals and presentations below:

Autocharging Workgroup

Presentation [here](#)

Goals: (1) Recommend a coalition position for the Smith bill; (2) Set out a high level plan for the recommended position; (3) Identify challenges, key tactics, and other items the Legislative Workgroup will need to resolve before January

Prevention Workgroup

Presentation [here](#)

Goals: (1) Recommend legislation for non-criminal legal system bills; (2) Recommend budget priorities; (3) Outline an opposition strategy; (4) Identify a lobbying strategy and advocacy needs for the Legislative Workgroup to adopt



AHEAD

October is Youth Justice Action Month (YJAM)!! YJAM is a month-long campaign where advocates come together to organize digital and in-person events and activities to raise awareness and inspire action on behalf of young people impacted by the justice system. We have a few things planned and would love to hear what you or your organization might be working on. Please feel free to contact Gail (gail@advancemaryland.org) and share any details you'd like us to amplify.

Under the theme United for Action – A Call for Unity, the National Youth Justice Network (NYJN) and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) have prepared resources and ways to get involved this YJAM. Here's how you can take action:

- Share the [YJAM 2025 Booklist](#) and [Letter to Librarians](#) with your local library or bookstore. Encourage them to highlight these powerful reads in October.
- Take photos of any YJAM book displays and share them on social media with the hashtag #YJAM2025. You can also use the [YJAM Social Media Toolkit](#) to share more information and raise awareness.

All of these resources and more are available at youthjusticeactionmonth.org. Don't miss these opportunities to engage in YJAM and please help spread the word!

Our Youth Informed Committee will share report-backs at our upcoming meeting on October 13 and make recommendations to the coalition on automatic charging, prevention focused legislation, and incorporating youth voices.

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 lawmakers seek to honor Black children buried in unmarked graves. State lawmakers and members of Maryland's Legislative Black Caucus visited the burial site at Cheltenham following the [Washington Post's](#) article. "At the end of the day," said State Sen. Michael Jackson, "we need to be mindful of never, ever allowing something like this to happen again." Read the Baltimore Banner article [here](#).

"Maryland must reckon with its juvenile justice past to protect today's youth," Marc Schindler writes in this [AFRO op-ed](#). "It's past time to afford the long-deceased youth the dignity they deserve and to stop throwing today's youth into an adult system that fails everyone involved."

Ivan Bates wants state legislature to change repeat juvenile offender laws. In [this](#) WBAL interview, Bates said he would like to see the legislature enact new laws about youth who are re-arrested while wearing ankle monitors. He wants courts to oversee violations instead of DJS and said there should be repercussions for parents.

Advocates warn of racial harm in new juvenile monitoring guidelines. Following DJS's new guidelines expanding detention for youth who reoffend while under electronic monitoring, civil rights advocates are warning that the new rules could lead to increased incarceration of youth who have not yet been convicted. BALT's Matt Parsons criticized the policy as reinforcing systems built on racial injustice: "The onus should be on the system, on DJS, to prove these policies don't disproportionately harm Black and Brown youth—although that would be difficult because that's exactly what they were designed to do." Read the full AFRO article [here](#).

Betsy Fox Tolentino speaks with WYPR on her priorities as head of Maryland DJS. Click [here](#) to listen.

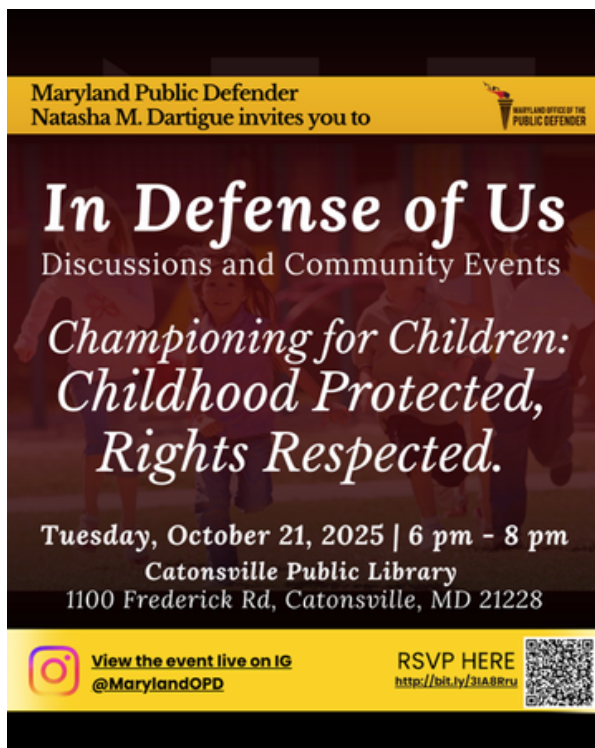
UPCOMING EVENTS

2025 State Ratings Report

Wednesday, October 8, 3pm

Virtual, Register [here](#)

Each year, Human Rights for Kids (HRFK) evaluates how well each state protects the rights of children in their criminal justice systems. During this year's launch event, HRFK will be focusing on how legislative successes around the country can create a blueprint for protecting the rights of our children. Hear from legislators who successfully championed reforms in 2025, along with other speakers from HRFK and The Just Trust. Click [here](#) to register.



In Defense of Us: Championing for Children: Childhood Protected, Rights Respected

Tuesday, October 21, 6–8pm

Catonsville Public Library

1100 Frederick Rd, Catonsville MD 21228

Children are the future. True public safety requires that we nurture and support our children in community, not in cages. The Maryland Office of the Public Defender and local partners will highlight evidence-based, safety-oriented strategies that enhance public safety by transforming lives, strengthening families, and building the foundation for thriving communities. Click [here](#) to register.

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

Email gail@advancemaryland.org.

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