

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES

FISCAL YEAR 2024 OPERATING BUDGET

**RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES ANALYSIS**

**BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE
SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY, TRANSPORTATION AND
ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
SENATOR SARAH K. ELFRETH
February 9, 2023**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HOUSE PUBLIC SAFETY AND ADMINISTRATION
SUBCOMMITTEE
DELEGATE TONY BRIDGES
February 13, 2023**

Introduction

To the Members of the Senate Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Analysis. The Department of Juvenile Services would like to thank our assigned analyst, Ms. Miller, for her thorough analysis.

I am proud to join the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) as the Acting Secretary. Over the past decade, DJS has experienced significant declines in the number young people referred to the juvenile justice system, as well as reductions in the utilization of incarceration, out-of-home placements, and community supervision. As these populations have declined, recidivism rates have also consistently dropped each year indicating that the state can have positive public safety outcomes for our young people and communities, less youth incarceration, and greater equity.

DJS is in the beginning stages of implementing two major reform efforts aimed at improving how young people experience Maryland's juvenile justice system: (1) the Juvenile Justice Reform Legislation and (2) creating a new Juvenile Services Education Program. First, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Juvenile Justice Reform Bill during the 2022 legislative session, which took effect on June 1, 2022. DJS is committed to working with juvenile justice stakeholders—the courts, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, educators, social service and mental health agencies and personnel, families, young people, and community leaders—to ensure that the implementation of the new law is successful. So far, data from the first six months of implementation already indicate a positive impact on system operations and outcomes. Specifically, as required by the new legislation DJS has increased the utilization of successful diversion strategies, and decreased the utilization of incarceration for low-risk young people. This comports with research and experience that shows that incarcerating low-risk youth increases their risk of reoffending and diversion of low-risk youth can improve their recidivism outcomes.

On July 1, 2022 the Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) transitioned from the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) to the Department of Juvenile Services. DJS and JSEP leadership collaborated with the Department of Budget and Management to support the education staff during the operational changes, and were even able to provide an increase in teacher salaries. As a member of the JSEP board, I am excited to work along with the entire board and JSEP program staff to expand the available offerings and provide the best education services to the young people in our facilities.

My vision for DJS is to continue to improve public safety through direct community engagement. Enlisting local communities in partnership with DJS will help change our young people's trajectory to one of hope and success. The majority of young people served by DJS return home, so building strong connections with communities will improve outcomes for young people, not just by reducing their recidivism rates, but also by improving positive outcomes like educational attainment, workforce development, civic engagement, access to arts and athletics programming, and other positive youth development opportunities. The kinds of opportunities all of us want for our own kids.

By partnering with communities that are the least resourced and most heavily impacted, DJS can promote a more fair, just, and equitable youth justice system. I am also committed to finding solutions to address the needs of the young people who, despite being the smallest percentage of the DJS population, gain the most community and media attention— youth sent to us for violent offenses as well as youth who are under age 13 who have been diverted via the recent law change.

I look forward to starting an inclusive agency strategic planning process to chart a course for DJS into the future. I have committed to visiting every local office, detention and treatment program that DJS operates. These visits will ensure that the strategic planning process is inclusive of staff, and the youth, families, and

communities we serve. I am also committed to ensuring the strategic planning process is transparent, and that the public and system stakeholders have ample opportunity to inform how DJS best serves Marylanders.

Responses

Case Management Information System Replacement

Critical to the department's management capabilities is its case management information system. From calendar 1999 through 2022, DJS used a client database referred to as the Automated Statewide System of Information Support Tools (ASSIST), along with other reporting systems. ASSIST is being replaced in fiscal 2023 by the Child, Juvenile, and Adult Management System (CJAMS). The new case management system is securely hosted on a State government shared platform. Implementation of CJAMS will allow DJS to participate in the Maryland Total Human services Integrated Network (MD THINK) along with other State agencies including the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Maryland Department of Labor. MD THINK will integrate human services systems in the State. The allowance includes an increase of \$1,336,000 for the department's MD THINK contract. The department explains that the fiscal 2023 expenditure is likely under budgeted but that it will be able to absorb any increases with its existing resources.

DJS should comment on the startup and ongoing costs associated with CJAMS and joining MD THINK. DJS should also comment on how these projects will allow the department to better manage its population and how joining MD THINK will improve interactions with health and human service providers in the State.

Beginning in fiscal year 2022, DJS began payment for the system development and programming necessary to engineer the DJS CJAMS module to address the needs associated with managing youth through the juvenile services process. These costs are anticipated to lessen as we approach implementation of CJAMS as our case management system. Since MD THINK is a multi-agency platform, ongoing support and maintenance costs will be established and apportioned among user agencies. At this time we do not have the amount of that cost.

Enhancing and streamlining the client case management system to today's workflow standards and processes will provide each agency with real time data to determine if and where a youth/family are being served to enhance interagency communication and service delivery.

Temporary Facility Closure

One of the ways that the department addressed its vacancies issue during fall 2022 was by temporarily closing Noyes – a facility for female youth – through the holiday season. Youth living at Noyes were relocated to CYDC and the Victor Cullen Center. Most staff at Noyes were relocated to the Cheltenham campus. This provided the department with greater flexibility in scheduling and overtime use during a time of year when employees are more likely to use leave. However, DJS is only able to do this by housing girls at CYDC, a 72-bed facility for male youth. When the temporary facility closure began, it was the department's intention to reopen Noyes sometime in January 2023. The department reports that it has not yet done so. DJS should comment on its plans to reopen the Noyes facility for female youth and whether any other temporary facility closures are planned to accommodate the department's staffing needs or for any other reason.

DJS should also comment on if there have been any modifications to the facility realignment plan or to the scope of its projects, particularly those relevant to its female youth.

Currently, DJS does not plan to reopen the Noyes detention facility in the immediate future and will continue to evaluate system needs before making a permanent decision regarding the facility. DJS will work with key system stakeholders, youth, families, and communities to examine the use of detention and treatment facilities and the continuum of community-based care to assure the needs of young people served by DJS and public safety are addressed. As part of that process, DJS will examine the need for secure and staff-secure beds, their geographic and gender distribution, and any gaps in the continuum of community programming. This will allow DJS to forecast programming and capacity needs throughout the state, including the proper number, structure, and distribution of girls' programming and the future of Noyes. The assessment will take time, but it is time well-spent, as it will assist in forming a data-driven consensus-based approach to developing a comprehensive community-based continuum of services and appropriate access to residential facilities.