

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES

FISCAL YEAR 2025 CAPITAL BUDGET

RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ANALYSIS

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CAPITAL BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE DELEGATE MARK S. CHANG February 19, 2024

BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE CAPITAL BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE SENATOR CRAIG J. ZUCKER February 20, 2024

Concerns (page 10)

Though DJS submitted its part 1 facility program for MYRC in September 2023, the part 1 approval process may yet take some time. Any delays to the approval process could result in a later design phase start date. Since the start of fiscal 2024, the ADP of the committed youth population rose from 67.1 to 75.4, a 12.3% increase. DJS is currently reviewing its long-term capital needs, which may be greater than when this project was requested. The most recently prepared FMP for DJS is from calendar 2015. Since that time, the department announced a major facilities realignment plan in November 2021. That realignment plan was partially completed but is not reflected in the current CIP as it is no longer suited to the population needs. DJS reports that it expects to prepare a new FMP by December 31, 2024. Additional information can be found in the V00A – DJS operating analysis. The department is also reviewing its needs in relation to proposed juvenile justice legislation this session. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) is concerned that as the department evaluates its needs and develops a new FMP, this could result in changes to this project's scope and the department's priorities for capital spending. **DLS recommends deleting the design funding for the MYRC renovation and expansion project.**

DJS Response: DJS respectfully requests to maintain the design funding for the MYRC renovation and expansion project. DJS is committed to completing a facility master plan but cannot envision a plan that does not include access to residential treatment in Baltimore City.

Currently, DJS does not operate any residential treatment programs in the Baltimore metro area, and all DJS treatment facilities are located in Maryland's Western Region. In FY 2023 Baltimore City youth made up the largest percentage of placements in each of DJS' western region treatment programs. Specifically, 28% of placements at the Backbone Youth Center, 25% of placements at the Greenridge Youth Center, and 40% of placements at the Victor Cullen Center are a result of cases originating in Baltimore City.

This long-standing problem requires that all Baltimore City youth, committed for treatment and rehabilitative services, receive those interventions far from their homes, communities, families and natural supports that are proven to enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes. The established research is clear; isolation from the community negatively impacts committed youth. Serving youth closer to their homes and communities increases opportunities for families, caregivers, and relatives to actively participate in treatment and play a critical role in meeting short-and long-term rehabilitative goals. Moreover, serving youth in or near their community allows for positive transitions and stronger connections when youth are returning to their homes, families and schools. Close proximity to educational programs, behavioral health supports, and community-based programming allows for meaningful and continuous engagement with services providers and ultimately supports the implementation of a reentry plan that is built together with these crucial support systems.

Beginning the design process to renovate and expand MYRC is necessary to support youth from the Baltimore City region and contribute to positive public safety outcomes. Delaying the access to the design funds, will result in even more time before Baltimore City youth have access to residential treatment services.

Issues

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1. Facility Utilization Rates Increased for Detained and Committed Youths As DJS evaluates its population needs, it will have to consider how the ADP of the detained and committed youths has changed over time as well as total facility capacity. The capacity of detention and committed treatment facilities decreased from 411 and 214 in fiscal 2019, to 312 and 84 in fiscal 2024. On different occasions, facilities were closed, or populations were moved to bring youth closer to their communities, to provide better services for female youth, to address staffing issues, and because of poor facility conditions. In the same period, the ADP of youth placed in DJS detention facilities decreased from 280.8 to 262.4. The ADP of youth placed in DJS committed treatment facilities decreased from 119.9 to 75.4. Though populations declined, the decreased capacity was sufficient to increase the utilization rates, as shown in Exhibit 5.

Over the fiscal 2019 to 2024 period, many changes occurred that decreased overall capacity. At the end of June 2020, DJS closed the J. DeWeese Carter Center and the Meadow Mountain Youth Center. In March 2022, the Thomas J.S. Waxter (Waxter) Children's Center closed. Girls who were placed at Waxter then moved to Noyes. Also in fiscal 2022, Backbone Mountain Youth Center had its capacity decreased to 18 for most of the fiscal year, and the Victor Cullen Center's capacity decreased from 48 to 18. In October 2022, Noyes was closed for renovations, and its staff relocated to CYDC. The Green Ridge Mountain Quest facility and Garrett Children's Center closed a few weeks later in November 2022. The bedspaces at Backbone Mountain Youth Center, Green Ridge Youth Center, and Victor Cullen were increased in fiscal 2023, bringing the capacity at committed treatment facilities from 66 to 84, partially to support greater population demands.

The utilization rate of detention and committed treatment facilities has increased to 84.1% and 89.7% in fiscal 2024 YTD data. While operating in fewer facilities allows DJS to consolidate its staff and save on other operational costs, it is unusual for the department to operate at utilization levels this high. Fluctuations or a continued rise in the population levels could pose significant challenges. **DJS should comment on whether it plans to re-open any recently closed facilities to support population needs in fiscal 2024 and 2025 or if it plans to adjust detention and committed treatment facility capacity in any way.**

DJS Response: At this time, DJS does not plan on re-opening any recently closed facilities to support population needs in fiscal 2024 and 2025. Please see response below detailing facility utilization adjustments to meet the needs of girls in DJS care.

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2. Plans for Female Populations Evolve In recent years, DJS has sought to consolidate its female youth. Previously, the department had been planning on building a new 48-bed female detention center on the Cheltenham campus referred to as the New Female Detention Center. When the New Female Detention Center opened, it would consolidate the services provided at Noyes in Montgomery County and Waxter in Anne Arundel County. The site of this planned detention center was originally going to be the Thomas O'Farrell Center, located in Carroll County, which had closed in December 2008. The New Female Detention Center site changed to Cheltenham in the 2021 CIP, before the project changed scope and became the CYDC – Addition for Females project in the 2022 CIP. Waxter closed on March 2, 2022, and Noyes closed on October 18, 2022. At the start of fiscal 2024, committed female youth were located at the Victor Cullen Center, while detained female youth were housed at CYDC and the Lower Eastern Shore Children's Center. All detained female youth were moved to the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) on October 16, 2023.

Both projects deauthorized by the fiscal 2025 capital budget bill – CYDC – Addition for Females and CYTC – would have included bedspace for female youth in DJS care on the grounds at Cheltenham. This removal may be aligned with the current facility needs, as the additional bedspace created by these projects would have far exceeded the anticipated female ADP. WMCC has a capacity of 24, and the male youths placed there were transferred to other detention facilities in the State for the facility's conversion to a female facility. Because the ADP for female youth is approximately 8 in fiscal 2024 YTD, this means that 7.7% of detention bedspace is for female youth who make up 3% of the total detention population. As of November 28, 2023, there were no girls placed at the Victor Cullen Center. V00 – Department of Juvenile Services – Capital Analysis of the FY 2025 Maryland Executive Budget, 2024 13 **DJS should clarify where female youth in a State-operated committed treatment facility would currently be placed and comment on the plan for housing its female detained and committed populations in the remainder of fiscal 2024 and in fiscal 2025. DJS should also comment on its long-term housing plan for female youth, given its goal of locating youth closer to their families.**

DJS Response: Serving girls is a top priority of this administration and to that end, DJS is taking the following steps:

1. Consolidated all committed and detained girls to one location at the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC). Detained girls were in multiple detention centers across the state, and committed girls were in a unit at

Victor Cullen. All staff at WMCC are trained in providing gender responsive care and the program interventions are designed to meet the diverse needs of the girls we serve.

2. Received technical assistance from a group with national expertise regarding girls residential and community programming provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP).
3. DJS acknowledges the need to address the female population and are exploring options as we develop the facility master plan.