

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 636

(Senator West, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

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**Juvenile Law – Commission to Study the Ability of the Department of Juvenile Services to Provide Effective Social Services to Juvenile Offenders**

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This bill establishes the Commission to Study the Ability of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to Provide Effective Social Services to Juvenile Offenders. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) must provide staff for the commission. By December 1, 2025, the commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024, and terminates December 31, 2024.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** DPSCS can provide staff for the commission using existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for members of the commission are assumed to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The commission must:

- review and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies and practices of DJS relating to (1) the supervision and monitoring of juvenile offenders; (2) treatment programs; (3) intervention and prevention services; (4) rehabilitative services; (5) community supervision; and (6) mental health services provided to juvenile offenders;

- consider available evidence-based assessments of DJS programs;
- develop data relating to the number of juvenile offenders and the length and frequency of juvenile participation;
- investigate the effectiveness of DJS programs and services aimed at juvenile offenders;
- assess the total cost associated with DJS programs and services within the last five fiscal years;
- make recommendations regarding improvements to DJS residential programs;
- assess and make recommendations regarding the ability of DJS to provide social services to juvenile offenders; and
- make recommendations regarding budgetary appropriations to sustain and improve DJS programs and services.

Members of the commission may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses, as provided in the State budget.

**Current Law:** DJS is the Executive Branch agency responsible for managing, supervising, housing, and providing programs to youth who are involved in the youth legal system. DJS is responsible for assessing the individual needs of referred youth and providing intake, detention, probation, commitment, and after-care services. The department collaborates with youth, families, schools, community partners, law enforcement, and other public agencies to coordinate services and resources. DJS annually publishes a [Data Resource Guide](#).

#### *State Advisory Board for Juvenile Services*

The State Advisory Board for Juvenile Services, which is within DJS, is comprised of certain members and is tasked with several responsibilities, including consulting with and advising the Secretary of DJS on multiple juvenile programs in the State; recommending policies and programs to improve juvenile services in the State; participating in interpreting the objectives of DJS for the public; participating in planning the development and use of available resources to meet the needs of DJS; and examining and reviewing fatalities involving children under DJS supervision for the purpose of advising the Secretary of DJS on policies and programs to prevent fatalities, as specified.

#### *Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices*

The Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices, which is staffed by DJS and the Department of Human Services, is tasked with:

- researching culturally competent, evidence-based, research-based, and promising practices relating to (1) child welfare; (2) juvenile rehabilitation; (3) mental health services for children; and (4) prevention and intervention services for juveniles;
- evaluating the cost-effectiveness of practices researched by the commission;
- identifying means of evaluating the effectiveness of practices researched by the commission; and
- giving special attention to organizations located in or serving historically underserved communities, identifying strategies to enable the community-based organizations that provide services for juveniles to evaluate and validate services and programming provided by those organizations.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 21, 2024  
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