



## Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

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**DATE:** February 11, 2025

**BILL NUMBER:** HB 522

**POSITION:** Favorable

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association (MSAA) supports House Bill 522, and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

The Department of Juvenile Services is responsible for the supervision and treatment of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system in Maryland. MD. CODE ANN., HUM. SERVS. § 9-216 vests the Department with this responsibility, and requires the Department to undertake specific actions and administer specific programs in service of this mission.

HB 522 creates an additional capacity for the Department, allowing (but not requiring) the Department to provide funding to a rehabilitation institution for up to one year. The availability of programs that are specific to the needs of juveniles is absolutely invaluable – children are different from adults, and programs that are tailored to the behavioral health or substance abuse needs of adults are often a poor substitute for programs specifically developed with juvenile needs in mind.

In testimony on other bills related to the juvenile justice system, MSAA has sought to bring to the attention of the General Assembly how the Department is currently failing the children entrusted to its care due to inadequate treatment options – across Maryland, prosecutors are seeing extended wait times before juveniles are admitted to Department programs, facilities being closed in the middle of a juvenile's treatment, and, in some instances, an inability to identify any program that meets a juvenile's level of need. We need to work together to ensure that we can make a positive difference in the life of a child at a time in their life when interventions will have the most impact – bills like HB 522, that provide for additional treatment options, are an important part of creating an effective juvenile justice system, and MSAA accordingly urges a favorable report.