

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

Wes Moore  
Governor

Betsy Fox Tolentino  
Secretary

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**Date:** March 3, 2026  
**Bill Number/Title:** HB 1559 - Children in Unlicensed Settings and Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients - Placement  
**Committee:** Appropriations  
**DJS Position:** 3/3/2026

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The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1559. HB 1559 advances and strengthens Maryland’s commitment to ensuring that children and youth are not placed in unlicensed settings. In partnership with Maryland’s child serving agencies, DJS supports the intent of the bill and is proposing amendments to ensure operational clarity, protect youth confidentiality, and align implementation with existing interagency structures.

DJS operates facilities and community-based programs across the State and is responsible for providing care, custody, supervision, and rehabilitative services to justice-involved youth. While DJS does not administer foster care placements, we work closely with the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), and other partners when youth have complex behavioral health, medical, or placement needs that intersect across systems.

HB 1559 prohibits placing children in unlicensed settings and increases oversight of pediatric hospital overstays. The bill also establishes new interagency structures intended to strengthen coordination and accountability. DJS supports the goal of eliminating unlicensed placements and institutionalizing cross-agency collaboration to better serve youth with high-acuity needs.

Under the Moore-Miller Administration, State agencies have taken meaningful steps to reduce reliance on unlicensed settings and improve placement capacity for youth with intensive needs. Strengthening residential capacity, improving interagency planning, and formalizing oversight mechanisms are critical components of this effort. HB 1559 provides an opportunity to codify this progress while ensuring thoughtful, sustainable implementation.

A primary challenge in resolving hospital overstays and other high-acuity placement situations is the complexity of individual youth needs. Youth may require specialized behavioral health treatment, medical stabilization, or therapeutic environments that are not immediately available. Additionally, many youth are involved with multiple State systems simultaneously. Coordinated, timely decision-making across agencies is essential. HB 1559 enhances the State’s interagency framework by:

- Establishing a Child and Youth Placement Review Panel (CYPRP) to provide structured oversight and coordination;
- Creating Rapid Response Placement Teams (RRPT) to address urgent cases; and
- Formalizing the Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families (ICCYF) to address statewide residential capacity and data coordination.

To ensure smooth implementation and maintain appropriate agency authority and confidentiality protections, DJS recommends the following amendments:

#### Clarifications and Structural Adjustments

- Clarify the definition of “unlicensed setting” to ensure precision and avoid unintended consequences.

- Clarify the definition of a “child in an unlicensed setting” to align with statutory custody definitions.
- Upgrade the Placement Manager role within the Governor’s Office for Children to a Senior Advisor position to reflect the level of cross-agency authority required.

#### Child and Youth Placement Review Panel (CYPRP)

- Require monthly meetings rather than more frequent standing meetings to allow meaningful preparation and case review.
- Designate DHS and MDH as co-chairs to reflect operational responsibilities.
- Adjust membership structure to support rapid response while limiting unnecessary access to confidential health and human services information.

#### Rapid Response Placement Team (RRPT)

- Organize the RRPT as a subcommittee of, and reporting to, the CYPRP.
- Designate DHS and MDH overstay coordinators as co-chairs.
- Clarify the 72-hour response timeline to ensure it is feasible.
- Rescind authority for the RRPT to override local department placement decisions, preserving clear lines of statutory responsibility.
- Modify meeting cadence from daily to weekly, except in urgent circumstances.

#### Interagency Council on Children, Youth, and Families (ICCYF)

- Subsume the activities of the Advisory Council on Maryland’s System of Care for Children, Youth, and Families into the ICCYF to avoid duplication.  
Require consultation with external stakeholders.
- Remove responsibility for assisting organizations with funding applications, allowing the Council to focus on policy and capacity development.
- Require submission of an interim report on January 1, 2027, and a final report on January 1, 2028, rather than annual reporting.
- Direct the ICCYF to study the proposed data and surveillance provisions prior to implementation, as these recommendations may carry additional fiscal impact.

HB 1559 presents an important opportunity to codify best practices, strengthen cross-agency collaboration, and ensure that Maryland’s most vulnerable youth are served in safe, appropriate, and licensed settings. With the proposed amendments, DJS believes the bill will better align with operational realities while preserving its core intent.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully requests a favorable report with amendments on HB 1556

