



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 19, 2026

**Senate Bill 537 - Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund - Establishment
SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 537 will create a fund for increased resources directed to community-based prevention programs, including Youth Service Bureaus, to prevent juvenile delinquency through addressing the mental health, substance use, and educational needs of youth and young adults. Funding will ameliorate conditions that contribute to delinquency, youth suicide, substance use disorder and family disruption.

The Youth Delinquency Prevention Fund is based on the Justice Reinvestment model. Justice Reinvestment is a policy approach that reallocates public funds from punitive criminal justice systems—such as youth incarceration—toward community-based services and interventions aimed at preventing crime and providing young people services to address issues such as mental health care, substance use, education, and employment. Justice reinvestment seeks to disrupt cycles of delinquency and reflects a shift toward restorative and preventive frameworks.

Maryland's practice of charging children as adults has created a costly system that impacts the Department of Juvenile Services, the Office of the Public Defender, and local detention centers.

- It costs \$1,174 each day a child is held pre-disposition, and for those held on adult charges, it amounts to nearly \$147,000 per child on average.
- Youth Service Bureaus are cost effective. For the cost of incarcerating 8 young people (estimated at \$1.7 million), YSBs can serve thousands of young people with a spectrum of services.

Savings achieved by keeping young people out of the criminal justice system, as well as other money, can be invested through this fund into services that will continue to save money and lives. The Governor's Office on Crime Prevention and Policy will administer the fund. That office already administers certain federally funded delinquency prevention grants.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 537.

It's time to invest in prevention!