

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Wes Moore
Governor

Betsy Fox Tolentino
Secretary

Date: February 25, 2026
Bill Number/Title: SB 737 -Juvenile Law – Probation and Treatment Services – Required Disposition (Parental Accountability Act)
Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee
DJS Position: Oppose

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 737. SB 737, the Parental Accountability Act, would require the juvenile court to order probation for any child not placed in secure confinement if the child has:

- Committed certain delinquent acts more than once, including acts that would constitute a crime of violence or a crime of violence with a dangerous weapon if committed by an adult, or has used a firearm in the commission of a crime; or
- Been adjudicated a Child in Need of Supervision more than once because the child is habitually truant.

Under the bill, probation in these cases must include the adoption of a treatment service plan and require both the child and the child's parent, guardian, or custodian to participate in rehabilitative services. If a parent fails to participate or meet with the juvenile counselor, the court must order the parent to do so.

DJS supports family involvement and the use of individualized treatment plans where appropriate. However, we are concerned that SB 737's mandatory disposition requirement removes essential judicial discretion.

Under current law, judges have the authority to make individualized determinations about the most appropriate dispositions for youth after considering all relevant factors, including risk and need assessments, evaluations, the youth's service needs, and input from all parties involved. This individualized judicial review is fundamental to identifying the intervention that best promotes public safety and the child's rehabilitation.

By requiring probation and specific conditions in all cases that meet the statutory criteria, SB 737 risks imposing an outcome that may not align with a particular child's needs or the court's thorough evaluation. Mandatory dispositions may inhibit the court's ability to respond flexibly to complex, individualized circumstances and could inadvertently limit the effectiveness of interventions designed to produce positive, long-term outcomes.

For these reasons, DJS respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 737.