



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

Maryland Public Defender and Prince George's County District Public Defender Decry Youth Curfew in Prince George's County

For Release: September 7, 2022

Contact: Melissa Rothstein, melissa.rothstein@maryland.gov, 443-963-9531

Curfews are a dubious crime strategy. This week, the Prince George's County Executive announced a curfew for children under the age of 17 that is set to go into effect on Friday, September 9th. The Maryland Office of the Public Defender opposes this decision due to its potential for harm on children and families and the "quick fix" approach which does not address the true underlying causes of violent crime.

"Curfews do not make anyone safer or address any underlying societal problems which are the true root of crime. At best, curfews are an ineffective band-aid; at worst, they criminalize our most vulnerable and at-risk children," said Maryland Public Defender Natasha Dartigue. "Curfews increase the likelihood of young people being needlessly drawn into the criminal justice system. Youth who are not safe in their home, or lack a stable home, will be subject to police and court involvement regardless of whether they are involved in any delinquent or criminal activity. Curfews serve as an entry into the school-to-prison pipeline."

"Prince George's County's children do not need further arrest or incarceration that will result from a curfew, and our communities deserve a response that is reflective of the data and research, none of which suggest that punishing children for being outside late at night is effective," said District Public Defender for Prince George's County Melissa Pryce.

"While we all want to curb violence, demonizing children will not protect our communities," Pryce noted. Violent crime has been on an overall decline since the mid 90's (from a high of 9,063 violent incidents in Prince George's County in 1996, to 3,161 incidents in 2020, according to the [Open Data Portal of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services](#)). [Juvenile complaints and arrests are likewise down precipitously over the past 10 years.](#)

"Spending on youth incarceration facilities still dwarfs that for community-based programs and family services," Dartigue noted. "The children who are involved in violence need evidence-based responses that account for their brain development, behavioral health needs, extreme poverty, and other concerns. Greater investment is needed in proven practices, such as multi-systemic therapy, functional family therapy, and youth advocate programs, rather than the failed measure of locking children up."

*

*

*