



ABOUT THE MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

We are the statewide advocates securing justice, protecting civil rights, and preserving liberty.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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DISTRICTS

- DISTRICT 1 - BALTIMORE CITY
- DISTRICT 2 - DORCHESTER, SOMERSET, WICOMICO, WORCESTER
- DISTRICT 3 - CAROLINE, CECIL, KENT, QUEEN ANNE'S, TALBOT
- DISTRICT 4 - CALVERT, CHARLES, ST. MARY'S
- DISTRICT 5 - PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
- DISTRICT 6 - MONTGOMERY COUNTY
- DISTRICT 7 - ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
- DISTRICT 8 - BALTIMORE COUNTY
- DISTRICT 9 - HARFORD COUNTY
- DISTRICT 10 - CARROLL, HOWARD
- DISTRICT 11 - FREDERICK, WASHINGTON
- DISTRICT 12 - ALLEGANY, GARRETT

DIVISIONS

- APPELLATE - DECARCERATION INITIATIVE - FORENSICS - FORENSICS MENTAL HEALTH - IMMIGRATION - INNOCENCE PROJECT CLINIC - JUVENILE PROTECTION - MAJOR CRIMES & COMPLEX LITIGATION - MENTAL HEALTH - PARENTAL DEFENSE - POST CONVICTION - SOCIAL WORK - TRAINING - EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Our work spans criminal, juvenile, parental defense and involuntary commitment proceedings.

With more than 550 attorneys and 1100 total staff, we are the largest defense law firm in Maryland.

We provide approximately 90% of the state's criminal defense representation, and are foremost experts on the substance, process, and impact of criminal law.

HOLISTIC DEFENSE

We see our clients as whole people and respond to their fuller needs.

OPD's Social Work Division serves as a national model for public defender offices around the country. Our social workers identify the root causes for the client's situation and provide clinical expertise and recommendations to attorneys and judges.

OPD's Peer Support Unit of professionals with lived experience serve as mentors and advocates by someone who has been through a similar situation. Our peer specialists provide referrals, support, and light case management for clients returning home.

SPECIALIZED UNITS

Defense practice is increasingly complex, and providing zealous representation to Marylanders requires specialized expertise. Our dedicated units for *forensics, forensic mental health, immigration, and juvenile protection* ensure that we can effectively represent our clients on the range of issues that we encounter. In-house expertise saves the state millions of dollars in expert fees and enhances our training and professional development for all staff.

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2024 POST CROSSOVER PRIORITIES

1 FUND INDIGENT DEFENSE

True public safety requires a robust public defender system that is sufficiently resourced to meet its clients needs, retain quality staff, and hold other system players accountable.

Body worn camera video and eDiscovery has changed criminal law practice at all levels. A case that may have previously involved client interviews and review of 10-15 pages of documents, may now include BWC video from several officers requiring hours of viewing.

The best standards – from a national caseload study released this fall – shows that OPD’s districts have about one-third the attorney positions that we need.

- [National Workload Study](#)
- [MOPD 2023 Annual Report](#)

2 PROTECT AND SUPPORT KIDS

True public safety acknowledges and addresses root causes of children’s behavior.

- HB 814 and SB 744 will dismantle the JJRA [LINK TO 1]PAGER]. The bills allow pretrial detention of more children, put more 10, 11, and 12 year olds in the system, limit informal processes that prioritize services, and disproportionately impact young Black children from marginalized communities.
- We urge the Maryland General Assembly to establish the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practice. MGA must invest in proactive resources and encourage services available through the CINS process rather than sweeping children into the legal system.

3 END MASS INCARCERATION

True public safety values redemption and rehabilitation, and reduces unnecessary costs of incarceration to reinvest in communities.

- [SB0123](#) Senator Carter’s Second Look Bill reexamines incarceration of people who no longer pose any significant safety risk.
- [SB0132](#) Senator Carter’s bill to remove the Governor from medical parole is an important legislative fix.
- [Release Older Prisoners: The Unger Story](#)

4 PROTECT IMPACTED PEOPLE

True public safety values human dignity and ensures the basic needs of all people.

- [SB0134](#) Senator Hettleman’s Correctional Ombudsman Bill allows investigations, reviews, and assessments of administrative acts taken by DPSCS or in relation to incarcerated individuals, and allows unannounced visits and on-site inspections of DPSCS facilities.
- [Correctional Ombudsman Information](#)

5 PROTECT FAMILIES

True public safety values rehabilitation and strengthening families.

- [HB0833](#) Delegate Nicole Williams’s bill establishes a presumption that a parent who is engaged in a residential substance use treatment program can provide proper care and attention to their child. It allows babies to stay with their parent while simultaneously ensuring that parents are receiving proper treatment for their disorder.

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