

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## 1. FUND INDIGENT DEFENSE

True public safety requires a robust, well-funded public defense agency that can retain quality staff, and hold other system actors accountable.

Inadequate funding of public defense compounds other systemic inequities faced by our client base, predominantly Black and Brown individuals from disenfranchised communities who are often denied access to resources and services.

Workload standards from 2023 show MOPD has ~1/3 the attorney positions we need. OPD FY24 Report.

**Natasha Dartigue**  
Maryland Public Defender

**Keith Lotridge**  
Maryland Deputy Public Defender

**Hannibal Kemerer**  
Chief of Staff

**Melissa Rothstein**  
Chief of External Affairs

**Elizabeth Hilliard**  
Director of Government Relations  
[Elizabeth.Hilliard@maryland.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Hilliard@maryland.gov)  
443-507-8414

## 2. ENACT SAFER TRAFFIC STOPS FOR ALL

HBXXX Sponsor Delegate N. Scott Phillips /  
SBXXX Sponsor Senator Charles E. Sydnor III

### Reducing non-safety-related traffic stops:

- Improves safety for officers, drivers, and everyone on the road;
- Strengthens public safety and community trust; and
- Reduces racial disparities in traffic enforcement.

Black drivers are stopped 20% more than white drivers

These stops are usually for equipment violations, vehicle registration issues, or low-level traffic infractions. (E.g., window tint, expired registration, driving in bus-only lane, etc.).

Scan for More Resources




The Maryland Office of the Public Defender is the largest criminal defense firm in the State of Maryland. Since 1972, we have been the state's foremost advocates for securing justice, protecting civil rights, and preserving liberty. Our work spans criminal, juvenile, parental defense, and involuntary commitment proceedings.

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## 3. REFORM MEDICAL AND GERIATRIC PAROLE

HB 190 Sponsor Vice Chair of Jud Delegate Sandy Bartlett /  
SB 181 Sponsor Senator Shelly Hettleman

Maryland's prison population is aging and ailing. Eligibility criteria for medical and geriatric parole are insurmountably narrow. As a result, infirm and older individuals who no longer pose a safety risk languish in prison at a high cost to the state.



Over 3,000  
incarcerated  
individuals are  
over 50 years old  
in Maryland as of  
2024.

We must reform these parole systems to ensure public safety, justice, and the end of overcrowding in prisons.

## 4. END AUTOMATIC CHARGING OF CHILDREN AS ADULTS



Black children  
make up 31% of  
Maryland's  
population but  
81% of children  
charged as  
adults.

Automatically charging children as adults is racially unjust.

Public safety is best served when children accused of crimes start in the juvenile system, where age-appropriate services, treatment, and education are available.

Starting cases in juvenile court ensures that the decision to put a child in the adult system is made by a judge.