

# 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.

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## 2. ENACT SAFER TRAFFIC STOPS FOR ALL

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

Black drivers are stopped 20% more than white drivers

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

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.).

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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.

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## 3. REFORM MEDICAL AND GERIATRIC PAROLE

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 must 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.

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