



MEDIA ADVISORY

MOPD Celebrates Gideon Day: Honoring the Landmark Decision in Public Defense

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) is thrilled to announce the 2nd annual Gideon's Day event, a celebration of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright* issued on March 18, 1963. The historic ruling forever changed the landscape of criminal defense by mandating states provide an attorney to criminal defendants who are not able to afford their own. This remains a cornerstone of our criminal legal system.

Join us in Annapolis as we celebrate Gideon's powerful legacy and its profound impact on public defense in Maryland. This event will recognize the unwavering commitment of all those who work tirelessly in public defense. The celebration will feature an inspiring presentation by prominent legal expert Kristin Henning, Blume, Professor of Law and Director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative at Georgetown Law, and the Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Gault Center. Her book, *The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth*, was published by Penguin Random House and featured on the front page of the New York Times Book Review. The book was awarded a 2022 Media for a Just Society Award by Evident Change and the 2022 Social Justice Advocacy Award from the In the Margins Book Awards Committee. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in conversations about the vital importance of access to counsel and the ongoing challenges faced in the pursuit of justice.

The celebration will also include touching stories from MOPD team members who work on the frontline, as well as remarks from Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Maryland Public Defender Natasha Dartigue, other officials and community partners.

WHEN: Tuesday March 18, 2025, 6:00pm – 8:00 pm
WHERE: Goldstein Treasury Building
80 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD

In 1961, Clarence Earl Gideon was charged in Florida state court with felony breaking and entering. When he appeared in court without a lawyer, Mr. Gideon requested that the court appoint one for him. Florida state law only provided for an attorney to be appointed to an indigent defendant in capital cases, so the trial court denied Mr. Gideon's request. Mr. Gideon represented himself at trial and was found guilty and sentenced to five years in prison. He challenged his conviction arguing that the trial court's decision violated his constitutional right to be represented by counsel. On March 18, 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that every person accused of a crime in America must be provided with a lawyer, regardless of their economic status or ability to pay.

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) was founded in 1972. Today, MOPD is the largest criminal defense firm in the State of Maryland and the preeminent experts on criminal, juvenile, mental health, and parental

defense law. We are the statewide advocates for securing justice, protecting civil rights, and preserving liberty. We amplify the voice for all those in Maryland impacted by the criminal legal system.

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