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Lt. Governor

Larry Hogan
Governor

Sam Abed
Secretary

DATE: February 11, 2021
Bill Number: HB 672 - Department of Juvenile Services – Juvenile Offense Database
DJS Position: Letter of Information

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS or department) is providing information for HB 672.

HB 672 requires DJS and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to develop and maintain a database that would track the description, date and location of all offenses involving juveniles.

The database created by HB672 would make information available that is currently confidential.

A public database, which includes dates and locations of offenses, could provide enough information to allow juveniles, victims, and witnesses to be identified, raising concerns about public safety and the confidentiality. Because of the confidentiality laws around juvenile court cases, no public-facing database currently exists.

Existing law allows for sharing case information with crime victims.

Under current law, prosecutors and DJS may already share information about a specific case with crime victims or with the crime victim's representative. Section 3-8A-27 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article specifically allows information sharing with crime victims when requested, including notifying the victim or the victim's representative of a court date or case event. This strikes a balance between juvenile confidentiality and information sharing with those impacted by allowing information sharing related to a specific case.

DJS recognizes the importance of data in making equitable and effective decisions.

DJS is a data-driven agency with a focus on collecting and reporting out data that may inform policy and reform efforts. As one example, the Department reports out, through the annual Data Resource Guide (DRG), state and county-level data on juvenile complaints, case dispositions, commitments, recidivism, and other key measures. DJS provides data detailed by age, race, gender, and jurisdiction. This data reported by DJS does not allow for the identification of youth or families served by the Department or information regarding crime victims or witnesses.

HB 672 carries a high fiscal impact.

HB 672 will require DJS to develop and maintain a secure database to interface with existing DJS data applications along with the AOC and other human services or public safety agencies that may house data. The department's fiscal analysis projects the cost to initially staff and develop such a database would be approximately \$1.1 million, with \$900,000 each year thereafter for continued staffing and maintenance.