

M A R Y L A N D

Youth Rights & Safety Hub



Happy new year, and welcome to the January 2026 Youth Rights & Safety Hub (YRSH) newsletter! YRSH is non-political and non-partisan. We seek to educate, not advocate. We do this by sharing relevant resources and data debriefs about youth rights and safety issues in our state.

Spotlight

Interview with Judge Andre Davis, Chair of the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging Best Practice

The Youth Rights and Safety Hub (YRSH) spoke with the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices's chair, former federal judge Andre M. Davis, about its first year of work and what to expect going forward.

[READ THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE](#)

A Youth-Led MTA Ad Campaign Is (Still) Changing the Stories Told About Kids in Baltimore

Young people across Baltimore are reclaiming the narrative about who they are and what they represent through a public art and storytelling initiative on buses and bus shelters throughout the city. The ["We Are More" campaign](#), appearing on Metropolitan Transportation Administration (MTA) buses and shelters and coordinated through the Youth Rights and Safety Hub (YRSH), is replacing tired and inaccurate perspectives about the city's youth with a more accurate view—"We are more!"—that is uplifting, positive, and humanizing.

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

January [Views on the News](#)

January's big news was the dramatic and ongoing drop in crime in Baltimore and across Maryland.

Year-end data released by the Baltimore Police Department on January 1 showed a 31% drop in homicides, a 24% drop in non-fatal shootings, a 37% decline in car jackings. The list goes on. [WBAL Radio](#) reported 2025 had the "lowest homicide rate in nearly 50 years" and, although Baltimore City Police no longer routinely publish youth crime data, it published a BPD statistic showing youth crime in the city was down more than 11 percent from the year before.

The [new online data dashboard](#) launched in January by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) showed similarly positive news. DJS recorded 6.4% fewer intake complaints statewide in 2025 compared to the year before—capping a 40.5% drop over ten years. The number of intakes for crimes of violence also fell—by 10.5% compared to 2024.

Amid this good news, young people signalled impatience with the narratives that too often demonize them. [WMAR-2 television's Ja Nai Wright](#) reported on the We Are More campaign, a public art and storytelling initiative on city buses and bus shelters coordinated by the Youth Rights and Safety Hub in partnership with several youth-led organizations. Two young people associated with the campaign also wrote an op-ed that was posted in the Baltimore Sun.

January news also reminded us of the dangers associated with incarceration. A report from the [Maryland Office of the Correctional Ombudsman](#) documented unsanitary and unsafe conditions, including rats and rodent feces, tattered shoes and extreme heat and cold at DJS facilities across the state, resulting in widespread [media coverage](#). Conditions may be even worse at adult facilities, where children charged as adults are sometimes placed. In 2025, DPSCS recorded 13 homicides of people in its custody—a [44% increase](#) over the year before. According to the Baltimore Banner, already this year, in January alone, three more people living inside DPSCS facilities have reportedly been murdered.

In The News

- [Baltimore and its youth deserve better than false narratives](#), by Nicolas Johnson-Smith and Faith Walton, Baltimore Sun, January 2, 2026.
- [Baltimore youth launch 'We Are More' campaign to change negative narratives](#), by Ja Nai Wright, WMAR-2 News, January 9, 2026.
- [Better data, better policies, better outcomes for kids and safety](#), by Robin Campbell, Maryland Matters, January 2, 2026.

- [Youth detention center plagued by mice, unsanitary conditions, improper medical care: report](#), by Ben Conarck, Baltimore Banner, January 5, 2026.
- ['Institutional problems': Report details several issues within city's Juvenile Justice Center](#), by David Collins, WBAL, January 7, 2026.
- [Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services says it's working to correct long list of issues in correctional facilities](#), by Scott Maucione, WYPR, January 14, 2026.
- [Maryland Justice Partnership launches to advance justice reforms](#), by Marcus Dieterle, Baltimore Fishbowl, January 12, 2026.
- [2025 crime data shows Baltimore records lowest homicide rate in nearly 50 years](#), by Kim Dacey, WBAL, January 1, 2026.
- [Baltimore Police Department Releases 2025 Year-End Report, Noting Record Level Achievements](#), Baltimore Police Department, January 1, 2026.
- [Inmate violence at Maryland State Prison leads to second murder within a month](#), by Ryan Dickstein, WMAR-2 News, January 11, 2026.
- [Third Maryland Prisoner is killed this month after record year](#), by Ben Conarck, Baltimore Banner, January 27, 2026.

This message has been authorized and paid for by the Advance Maryland Education Fund.