

M A R Y L A N D

Youth Rights & Safety Hub



Welcome to the March 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

Community Schools 101 – What You Need to Know by Riya Gupta

“The idea is simple: students learn better when the barriers outside school are addressed too. That can mean helping families access health care, providing after-school programs, offering mental health services, or connecting parents with community resources. Instead of families having to navigate multiple systems on their own, the school becomes a hub where support is easier to access.”

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

What About the Girls? by Carol Cichowski

“Maryland school officials have suspended or expelled an average of 16,000 girls a year during the past three years. Girls are being pushed out of elementary, middle, and high schools—despite research showing that suspension increases their risk of academic failure, dropping out, and justice involvement. The past decade has seen more than a 40 percent increase in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (OSS) for Maryland girls, who account for a higher percentage of excluded students now than a decade ago.”

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

**HARRIET TUBMAN
CULTURAL CENTER**

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March Views on the News

The Youth Rights and Safety Hub is chartered to do public education; we are completely non-political and will never promote or take positions on electoral or legislative matters. Sometimes, however, our monthly Views on the News series chooses to discuss media coverage of political issues, including pending legislation. On these occasions, our focus is not on the topic of the coverage. It is on how the media is covering it.

On March 11, WBFF (Fox45) ran a four minute, 11 second segment titled "[FOX45 sends video of prosecutors' concerns to lawmakers backing juvenile justice bill.](#)" It was peculiar reporting that caught our attention for its troubling departure from standard journalism practice.

Here's how the Fox TV news anchor introduced the piece:

"As state's attorneys from across Maryland push back against legislation to end automatic charging of young offenders, Fox 45 News is pressing lawmakers on why they are moving forward."

In other words, instead of reporting the states' attorneys' concerns to the public, WBFF took the state's attorneys' views directly to the legislators who support the bill—"pressing" them to justify their support; the public is little more than a witness to the exchange. (By the reporter's own admission, the footage had already been shared with Fox viewers on earlier occasions.)

In essence, Fox News appears to be acting as an advocate for the prosecutors—using their very public platform to “push back” against lawmakers who support the bill.

To see if we might be misjudging this, YRSH got a second opinion. We shared the piece with an expert—Kelly McBride, Senior Vice President and Chair of the Craig Newmark Center for Ethics and Leadership at the Poynter Institute, an internationally recognized authority on journalism practice.

Here’s what she told us:

“It’s not inappropriate for a journalist to bring the views of a citizen to state legislators. That’s a form of accountability. But these are not regular citizens without power. These are prosecutors, basically law enforcement. Journalists are supposed to hold law enforcement accountable. It’s hard to do that if you are acting as a messenger for law enforcement.”

Since the earliest days of our republic, Americans have recognized a free press as an essential prerequisite for a functioning democracy—because it helps to inform the public about issues of the day. In this case, however, Fox45 is bypassing the public altogether and advocating directly to legislators on behalf of law enforcement. That’s not news; it’s placing a thumb on the scale. We should be honest and call it what it is.

February [Views on the News](#)

With the state’s legislative session in full swing, nearly all recent media coverage of youth justice and safety issues has focused on legislative proposals. The Youth Sentencing Reform Act (SB323), which would reduce the number of young people automatically charged as adults, and Kanaiya’s Law (HB0980), a bid to increase oversight of the foster care system following the suicide of 16-year-old Kanaiyah Ward last September, are prime examples.

Because the Youth Rights & Safety Hub is non-political and focuses solely on public education, we won’t be commenting on any of that coverage.

Instead, this month’s Views on the News highlights noteworthy youth justice news from (mostly) beyond our state borders.

[‘Alarmed’: What Happens When Juvenile Detention Centers Don’t Have Enough Staff](#), by Jamiles Lartey, The Marshall Project, Feb. 21, 2026

Disturbing conditions within Maryland youth justice facilities are often blamed on staff shortages. Insufficient staffing has also been tied to the alarming increase in homicides in the state’s adult prisons.

Maryland is not unique in this regard, however. In recent years, similar staffing challenges and outcomes have been reported in many other jurisdictions, including New York, Los Angeles, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

As one witness, from California, summed up the problem: “Without adequate staff, youth miss school, recreation and medical appointments. They spend more time stuck in cells, which [breeds frustration](#)

[and sometimes violence....”](#)

[Changing the narrative: Researchers call for a new approach to reporting gun violence](#), Temple Now, March 4, 2026

A new report from a research team headed by Temple University professor Jessica H. Beard has found that the ways television news reports violence can shape trauma, fear and inequality in the communities most affected.

The research team’s analysis of more than 300 news clips from Philadelphia’s four major broadcast stations in 2021 found that television news tends to focus on individual incidents, fanning fears among nearby residents. “If you are watching TV news and you don’t see context, you don’t see root causes, you don’t see solutions—it feels hopeless,” Beard says. “You don’t know what to ask for. You don’t know how to be part of prevention.”

The study recommends TV reporters shift toward a public health approach — providing context about patterns and prevention, including voices beyond law enforcement.

“Gun violence is preventable,” Beard says. “Reporting should help people understand why it happens and what works to stop it.”

[What Juvenile Justice Data Reveal — And What the Numbers Can’t Tell Us](#), by Tom Woods, Annie E. Casey Foundation, February 18, 2026

This report from the Casey Foundation’s lead data and research analyst show that youth justice policies that are [less reliant on incarceration and more focused on diversion and rehabilitation](#) continue to deliver good results. The study of national data found that In the years since the COVID pandemic, which had disrupted long-term declines in youth offending, arrests of young people are once again trending down.

The study does, however, point to two “stubborn truths” that demand attention:

1. Communities of color — Black families especially — continue to bear the heaviest burdens of crime and system involvement, and
2. It is a mistake to conflate youth crime with violent crime. Young people commit only a small portion of violent crime, which is overwhelmingly associated with adults.

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In The News

- [When Baltimore teens gather outside, arrests and curfews often follow. Does it help?](#), by Céilí Doyle and Lillian Reed, Baltimore Banner, March 14, 2026.
- [Md. Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs released updated student recommendations](#), by Sam Epner, Watermark Out News, March 6, 2026.
- [Maryland lawmakers on track to confirm new DJS secretary following departmental turmoil](#), by Sarah Petrowich, WYPR, February 24, 2026.
- [Grant fuels push to investigate Maryland's reform school for Black boys](#), by Mira Beinart, Baltimore Fishbowl, February 18, 2026.
- [Maryland Human Services Secretary Rafael López resigns amid agency turmoil](#), Danielle J. Brown, WTOP, February 17, 2026.
- [Maryland corrections officer indicted for alleged assault of juvenile in custody](#), JT Moodee Lockman, CBS News, February 17, 2026.

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