



## VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

### Meeting Minutes

#### **Advisory Group: Evaluating the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Virginia's Juvenile Detention Centers**

August 16, 2022, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Fairfax Government Center

#### **Attending:**

Greg Hopkins, W. Rice Lilley, Dean Lynch, The Honorable Dave Marsden, Jennifer Newman, Nicole Wittmann, Jason Houtz

#### **Attending Virtually:**

Janet Areson, Katie Boyle, The Honorable Carrie Coyner, The Honorable Susan O'Prandy Fierro, Elizabeth Hobbs, Samantha Hollins, Alison Powers, Banci Tewolde, Tyler Williams

#### **Staff Attending:**

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen, Elizabeth Spinney

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions:**

*The Honorable Dave W. Marsden, Senator, Senate of Virginia*

Senator Marsden called the meeting to order and welcomed the advisory group and public to the meeting. Senator Marsden then had all members of the advisory group in attendance introduce themselves. Senator Marsden started off with an overview and stated that he wanted to make sure that what Virginia does with detention centers is done correctly.

Senator Marsden reviewed the costs figures for detention centers, including education costs. He stated that firearms arrests have seen an uptick, but did not believe this was the case for other serious types of arrests of juveniles.

Senator Marsden stated that we needed to look to see if there was a model to better educate youth in detention centers. Senator Marsden noted that 51% of pre-dispositional kids are in detention for 10 days or less.

Additionally, Senator Marsden stated that juveniles in the CPP, which are DJJ state juveniles housed in detention centers, have a higher recidivism rate than juveniles in the state correctional center program. Senator Marsden believes this also needs to be looked at.

## **II. Advisory Group Roundtable Discussion**

*The Honorable David W. Marsden, Senator, Senate of Virginia*

Senator Marsden then opened the meeting to a roundtable discussion. Senator Marsden stated that the Governor's administration should review the information collected and analyzed by this study, and use this information to make determinations on how to proceed.

Dean Lynch acknowledged the number of juveniles in detention has decreased dramatically. This smaller population though has high needs. Also, IEPs control the education given to many of these students. Mr. Lynch asked whether regulations could be softened to allow for more flexibility in education delivery. Mr. Lynch asked if there has been any thought to repurposing part of these facilities and/or doing a community needs assessment? Senator Marsden said that any locality could repurpose a home, but he still wants the Commonwealth to take a holistic look at detention services. Finally, Mr. Lynch added that it is important to consider regulations and what state agencies should or would be involved with when it comes to repurposing.

Jason Houtz, stated 80% of his costs running a detention center is personnel. He is concerned with the cost of paying staff and their well-being if more juveniles are placed in centers, and believes this needs to be assessed as part of this process. Senator Marsden said the approach this work has taken is to look at quantitative as well as quality of services. Mr. Houtz added that he wants to make sure this group looks at issues outside of recidivism when looking at quality of services. Senator Marsden said recidivism is just for the discussion on CPP and post-dispositional.

Rice Lilley stated that citizens look at recidivism as an important measure. Mr. Lilley stated that this group needs to look at the money that is going out for services. Mr. Lilley would like to look at where the money needs to be cut back.

John Dowdy stated that closing down centers and moving juveniles to a new center shifts the costs to localities because sheriffs will need to drive juveniles further distances and spend more time at doctors' appointments and court. Senator Marsden acknowledged Mr. Dowdy's comments and said that there would be some inconvenience to parents as well.

Greg Hopkins brought up the situation when Richmond JDC was closed for a year around 2011. Richmond had some of these discussions and in the end decided to keep their facility open.

Elizabeth Hobbs stated the Sheriffs' Association is not in agreement with closing facilities because of the cost increase. Senator Marsden stated that he wanted to establish a baseline of sheriffs' costs and look into reimbursing them with state dollars.

Cassandra Sheehan asked what safeguards would need to be in place if there was an increase in crime leading to more juveniles needing to be put in detention. Senator Marsden said crime is one of the drivers to incarceration but so is the use of risk instruments.

Claudia Arko asked about salary differentials based on cost of living from locality to locality. Ms. Arko asked if this is being looked at. Senator Marsden said there isn't a link between state and JDCs in terms of cost of living when it comes to the block grant. Jason Houtz stated that the formula is being looked at right now at the Department of Juvenile Justice. Dean Lynch stated that he would like this group to look at a cost of competing adjustment as part of the formula.

Nicole Wittmann asked about repurposing a part of JDCs to be shelters or day programs for youth. She asked if this is reasonable. Jason Houtz stated that the space would have to be totally rebuilt from his perspective in order to repurpose. John Dowdy stated that his facility in Prince William would not be amenable to repurposing. Mr. Houtz added that construction costs have been superseded by budgetary language for some time. Senator Marsden confirmed this. Amy Atkinson brought up the possibility raised at the Roanoke meeting of repurposing a wing at the Roanoke Valley Juvenile Detention Center for sex trafficking victims. Ms. Wittmann stated that she has concerns about moving youth away from home.

Jennifer Newman stated the Court's concern is juveniles being outside of the community and the barriers it puts up to getting services in place for when they return back home. Ms. Newman said that the Court appreciates that this study process has incorporated the perspective of judges.

Sonnja Brown added that she would like to see family engagement with this process. Senator Marsden added that 50% of detention center administrators said distance didn't impact family engagement (this is based on current distances).

Before wrapping up the meeting Senator Marsden reminded the group that Commission staff placed discussion questions in everyone's packet, and added that members could submit responses to these queries to Commission staff after the meeting.

### **III. Next Steps and Adjournment**

Senator Marsden stated that the work of this study would be presented at the September 21, 2022, Commission on Youth meeting, and at that meeting any proposed recommendations would go out for public comment. Then draft recommendations would be voted on at the October 19, 2022, Commission on Youth meeting.

Senator Marsden gave advisory group members in attendance information about an optional tour of the Fairfax Juvenile Detention Center. Senator Marsden then adjourned the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.