



# MEDIA STATEMENT

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Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **REGARDING RECENT REPORTS OF FIRES AT BON AIR JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL CENTER**

According to a preliminary investigation by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), on Sunday, March 2, 2025, a resident at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center (BAJCC) started a small fire in his individual room. The resident used a battery and its connecting wires from headphones. DJJ provides headphones to facility residents for enrichment. For some youth, they are also used in the therapeutic process as a coping mechanism. To avoid these incidents entirely would mean having to deny all youth such enrichment tools and/or separate some residents from others indefinitely which, in the best interest of the youth, the agency refuses to do.

There were no injuries to the residents as a result of this incident, no damage to the structure of the facility, and the fire was contained to one room and extinguished prior to the arrival of authorities.

A similar incident on Thursday, March 6, 2025, is under investigation.

BAJCC houses a very challenging population with high rehabilitative needs. During the therapeutic process, occasionally some behaviors exhibited by juveniles in the community are repeated in the facility. Firestarting is a routine occurrence within this facility in working with this challenging population as we ready them for re-entry into the community. An extremely small number of residents are repeat offenders in the firestarting behavior. We currently anticipate a slight uptick in these activities until self-

regulation occurs on a rehabilitative level for this group. Again, we thank the dedicated staff who intervened and resolved the fire prior to the arrival of the authorities

The fire detection system at BAJCC is monitored by a third-party company, and a process is in place where calls are occasionally made automatically when a sensor indicates a potential issue, like a small amount of smoke. Calls for service are made by a third party not on the facility premises. Often, as in here, the need for the calls is canceled prior to the arrival of authorities. We sincerely apologize for inconvenience caused to the Chesterfield Fire Department, yet the Department must always prioritize ensuring the safety of all of our residents.

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