

# Reinvest Savings into Programs that Work for Kids

*Pending legislation will reinvest cost savings from reducing out-of-home placements into community programs for Pennsylvania's justice-involved youth and strengthen system oversight.*

## What Problem Does the Legislation Solve?

Most youth in Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system who are placed in institutions are there for their first offense or for a misdemeanor for which an adult would likely not be incarcerated. These placements are very costly and have been shown to produce worse public safety outcomes than community-based programming. There is currently no mechanism in place to reinvest savings realized by declining youth placements into more effective community-based programs. Findings from Pennsylvania data and research indicate:

- Out-of-home placements cost the Commonwealth **\$100k to \$200k per child per year**, a cost nearly 50 times the cost of high-quality, effective, community-based family therapy.
- Just **20% of Pennsylvania's nearly \$350 million in spending** on delinquency services is spent on services for youth living at home.
- **Averted costs can be reinvested** into a range of priority areas, including evidence-based nonresidential services, diversion programs, juvenile probation services, and restitution funds.

*80% of juvenile delinquency spending in Pennsylvania is focused on out-of-home placements.*

In addition to reprioritizing its spending, Pennsylvania can improve juvenile justice system accountability by enhancing data tracking and reporting to the public, appointing impacted youth and families to oversight bodies, and assessing the impact of policy changes on racial and ethnic disparities.

## What Does the Legislation Do?

This legislation will prioritize taxpayer dollars for the most effective and least costly juvenile justice interventions, while increasing system oversight to provide accountability for how our tax dollars are spent. Specifically, the bill:

- **Reinvests cost savings** from reduced reliance on out-of-home placement into:
  - Expanded evidence-based **nonresidential services**,
  - Increased funding for **juvenile probation services**,
  - More high-quality options for **diversion**, and
  - **Restitution funds** to support victims.
- **Increases system accountability and address inequities** through enhanced data reporting to the public, including on racial impact, and broader representation on oversight bodies.

## What is the Status of the Legislation?

Senators David Argall and Sharif Street introduced legislation addressing these issues last session. [SB 1261](#) was referred to the Senate Aging and Youth Committee. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the House this session.