



**TO:** Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee  
**FROM:** Ashley White, Director of Government Relations  
**DATE:** May 23, 2022  
**RE:** **CCAP Comments on Juvenile Justice Reforms**

---

On behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), representing all 67 counties in the commonwealth, I write to offer our comments on Senate Bills 1226, 1227, 1228 and 1229, each of which would provide for administrative cost savings related to the juvenile justice system. These savings would also free up revenue for reforms. CCAP recognizes that conceptually these reforms will result in improved outcomes for youth in our care.

CCAP recognizes that this legislation could be quite beneficial although we must highlight our ongoing struggles with recruitment and retention of the staff needed to provide supports as anticipated in SB 1226, particularly with the impact on our juvenile probation system. Workforce shortages continue to frustrate our ability to address the needs of those in supervision. Caseloads must be reasonable to allow for effective supervision and supports.

Senate Bill 1227 seeks to serve children and youth in the home, which evidence shows results in much better outcomes. We agree with the goals of the bill, but caution that services and supports needed to accomplish this initiative remain in short supply. CCAP urges an expanded discussion on the ways we can encourage providers to offer services as described in all parts of the commonwealth.

Senate Bill 1228 requires regular judicial review of placements to determine their ongoing necessity and effects on youth in custody. CCAP agrees conceptually with this bill and again urges attention to the development of services that will support their implementation.

Senate Bill 1229 provides for additional funding towards costs incurred in proceedings. The funding for indigent defense has been a concern for counties for decades and increasingly so with juvenile cases, presenting challenges due to the complex needs of those who require representation. The funding that counties could receive will be very helpful in assuring that youth have the best possible representation that can lead to community-based supports pre-adjudication. There may be a need to define a means for counties to determine what public defense costs are attributed to qualified cases.

In order to implement reforms successfully, attention must be focused simultaneously on increasing the availability of evidence-based community supports, including the juvenile probation system. Counties continue to support juvenile justice reform, but recognize that there will be complex challenges related to the workforce and that these challenges should be taken into consideration.

It is worth noting that counties have identified the Human Services Workforce Crisis as one of their top legislative priorities for 2022. Finding enough qualified and willing staff has been a challenge across many sectors, severely exacerbated by the pandemic. While all industries are suffering with workforce shortages, many county-provided services are unique as they rely entirely on people to deliver those services and work cannot be performed by computers or other machines. The same can be said about the additional workforce and coinciding resources that will be needed to accomplish the worthy objectives of this bill package. As such, counties urge the General Assembly to consider the development of programs and partnerships to streamline recruitment efforts, create county employment pipelines and partner with counties in advertising the values of pursuing a career in civil service.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this legislation. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.