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House Minority Leader

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House Minority Whip

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY JOINT REPUBLICAN CAUCUS

October 1, 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD
21401

Dear Governor Moore,

We write today to urge the removal of Juvenile Services Secretary Vincent Schiraldi.

During Secretary Schiraldi's tenure, the Department has been at the center of a number of catastrophic failures, the most recent being the release of a juvenile suspected in the brutal beating of an elderly man in Baltimore City.

The Department of Juvenile Services appears to have adopted a "catch-and-release" philosophy with Secretary Schiraldi at the helm, even when it comes to the most violent juvenile offenders committing the most heinous crimes. We do not believe that this is the philosophy that you have espoused or have personally adopted, and you have the power and the opportunity to change the trajectory of this vital public safety issue for the betterment of all Marylanders.

As you may be aware, last week, a 66-year-old man was brutally attacked and robbed in the neighborhood of Butcher's Hill. The two suspects, who were quickly taken into custody, are 15 and 18. While the 18-year-old has been charged with attempted murder, we only know that the 15-year-old was released to a guardian after being taken to a juvenile detention center.

In May, it was reported that the Department of Juvenile Services instructed Baltimore City police to release a repeat violent juvenile offender to his guardian after he was taken into custody as a suspect in a violent attempt to steal a car. In the incident report, the Baltimore City police officer reported that the suspect had an "extensive violent criminal history" and posed an "imminent danger to the citizens of Baltimore City". Even so, the officer was required to transport the juvenile "back into his mother's custody without any stipulations of house arrest."

Last November, in another incident in Butcher Hill, a woman was assaulted and robbed by a 14-year-old and a 12 year-old who tried to steal her car. The theft was unsuccessful as neither could drive a stick shift. Initially, the Department of Juvenile Services told the victim in the incident that the suspects would not be charged due to their ages. The suspects were eventually charged with multiple counts of theft, robbery, and assault, but received probation.

We would be remiss if we did not remind you that it was under Schiraldi's leadership that a convicted juvenile sex offender, who had committed vile crimes against small children, was attending one of Maryland's public schools.


While our concern surrounding the Schiraldi-era “catch-and-release” policy is enough to call for his ouster, it is not our only concern. The Department has not been transparent regarding an incident that took place at the Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC) in Hagerstown in June. Maryland State Police responded to the center after receiving a call that the WMCC was on lockdown. While Department officials have not been forthcoming with answers on the incident, anonymous reports from employees at the WMCC have described the incident as a takeover by some of the students in the facility. They have also described an increasingly problematic environment inside the facility itself, where staff is assaulted and often afraid of the students.


It is also important to mention several troubling reports of Secretary Schiraldi’s past actions, including his time as head of the New York City Department of Corrections. He is party to a lawsuit filed by a former detainee at Rikers Island correctional facility in New York City, in which he is accused of approving and ratifying “policies which permitted the officers and supervisors failures to provide adequate monitoring and supervision of inmates.” The plaintiff in the case claims he was “brutally beaten and suffered severe and permanent physical injuries and emotional distress” as a result of Secretary Schiraldi’s policies.


Another issue that was not brought up during Secretary Schiraldi’s confirmation hearings is the matter of a 2010 misconduct probe that found Secretary Schiraldi responsible for the escape of a juvenile at a secure residential facility when he was the head of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services in Washington, D.C. in 2008. The report found that not only did Secretary Schiraldi violate agency policy by taking three juveniles off campus without a court order by allowing them to attend a holiday cookout at his home, but he also waived the requirement that they be restrained. When one of the three juveniles escaped, Secretary Schiraldi waited two hours to report them missing. That juvenile was found and arrested 22 days later for selling cocaine. One has to wonder if the Secretary’s nomination would have been confirmed had this incident and report been more widely known.

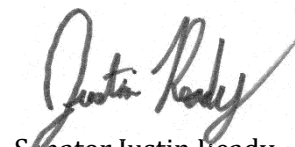
We take seriously your commitment to partnership and firmly believe this request stems not from partisanship or politics but from a real desire to work with you and your team to address common sense concerns with the juvenile justice system. We acknowledge that not all of the problems with the Department of Juvenile Justice or Maryland’s juvenile crime surge are Secretary Schiraldi’s fault. The agency suffers from decades of institutional dysfunction and neglect. Maryland’s changes to juvenile justice laws have also had a significant impact. However, Secretary Schiraldi is not the agent of positive change that this department, and this state, desperately need. We therefore urge his removal, either by resignation or termination. Maryland cannot wait any longer.

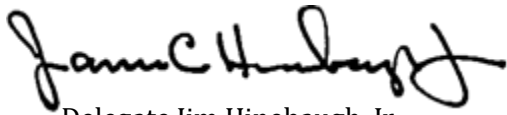
Sincerely,


Delegate Jason Buckel
House Minority Leader

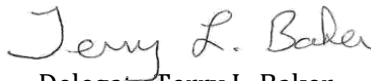

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Delegate Jesse Pippy
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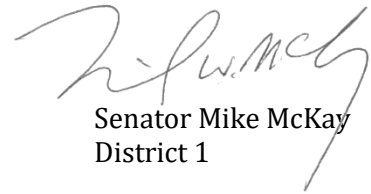

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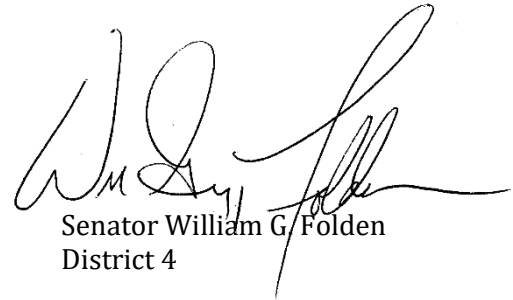
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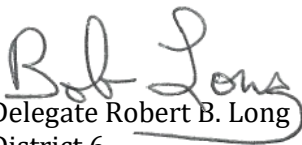
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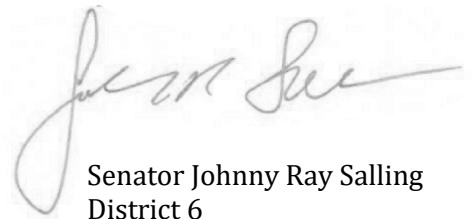
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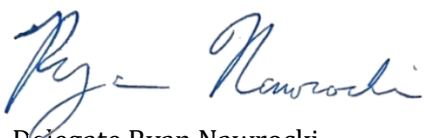
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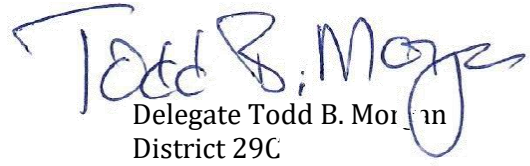
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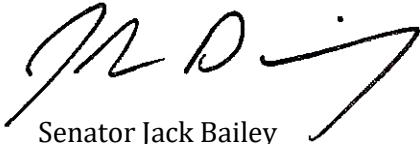
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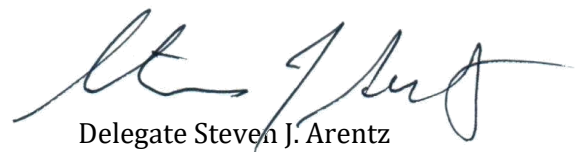
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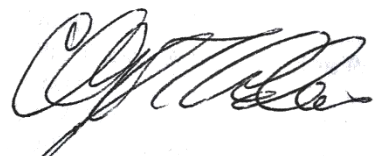
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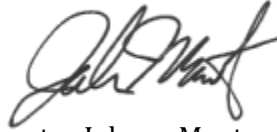
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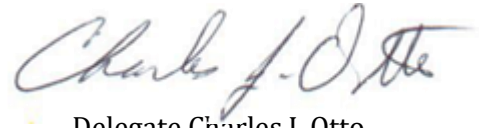
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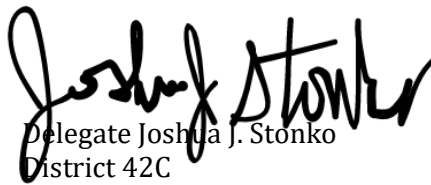
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Senator Mary Beth Carozza
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