

Youth Justice Legislative Update 2026

The following is a summary of youth justice legislation considered during the second regular session of the 132nd Legislature, which adjourned on Wednesday, April 29, 2026. The general effective date for nonemergency laws passed in the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature is Wednesday, July 29, 2026.

Enacted Legislation

LD 102, An Act to Notify the Public of Juveniles That Have Escaped a Department of Corrections Facility and to Direct the Department of Corrections to Study the Further Release of Juvenile Intelligence and Investigative Record Information, *Sponsored by Representative Michel Lajoie*

- Allows the Commissioner of DOC or a designee to release certain information about a youth who has escaped from a facility, including a physical description, a photograph, any recent or likely location, and the fact that DOC is searching for the youth.
- Requires DOC to form a working group to examine best practices for apprehending a youth for whom a warrant has been issued or who has allegedly escaped custody and outlines the working group's membership.
- No later than Jan. 1, 2027, DOC must submit a report, including recommendations and any proposed legislation, to a legislative committee focused on criminal justice and public safety.

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on April 3, 2026.

LD 740, Resolve, to Study Methods for Improving Youth Community Supervision and Increasing Juvenile Diversion from Formal Judicial Processing, *Sponsored by Representative Grayson Lookner*

- Requires DOC to form a task force to study methods for safely diverting youths from formal judicial processing.
- Requires DOC to recommend improvements to existing community supervision practices.
- Outlines task force membership and duties. Duties include: 1) collecting data about diversion of youth, prior to formal court involvement; 2) identifying obstacles and improvements to diversion; 3) establishing at least one pilot site for implementing diversion methods, with a particular focus on avoiding supervision and court involvement; 4) to the extent possible, developing and implementing a family-engaged case planning process for youth under supervision.
- No later than Jan. 1, 2028, DOC must provide an update on the work of the task force to a legislative committee focused on criminal justice and public safety.

Became law without the Governor's signature on April 26, 2026.

LD 1097, Resolve, to Require the Department of Education to Convene a Group to Develop Best Practices for De-escalation and Behavior Intervention, *Sponsored by Representative Kelly Noonan Murphy*

- Requires the Department of Education (DoE) to convene a group of teachers and experts in de-escalation and behavior intervention to develop best practices for training in areas such as positive behavior interventions, communicative intent, and alternatives to restrictive procedures.
- Requires DoE to distribute the best practices no later than September 1, 2026.

Became law without the Governor's signature on January 11, 2026.

LD 1098, Resolve, Directing the Department of Education to Review the Use of Abbreviated School Days, *Sponsored by Representative Kelly Noonan Murphy*

- Requires DoE to review the use of abbreviated school day provisions described in DoE rules.
- The DoE must have submitted a report no later than Feb. 1, 2026, with data regarding the frequency and duration of abbreviated school days, impact of abbreviated school days on school funding, and other points of interest.

Became law without the Governor's signature on January 11, 2026.

LD 1893, An Act to Establish an Independent Office of the Child Advocate, *Sponsored by Representative Lori Gramlich*

- Establishes the Office of the Child Advocate as an independent office within the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to “provide independent oversight of state agencies and promote the best interests of children and ensure that children receive timely, safe and effective services in accordance with state and federal law.”
- Sets out requirements for the Child Advocate, such as professional qualifications and term limits.
- Sets out guidelines for reviewing complaints, including how and when to involve or refer to other departments.
- Allows the office to make recommendations and to conduct systems-wide or periodic review of policies and programs related to children.
- Creates the Advisory Committee to the Child Advocate to recommend candidates for the office, consider reappointment, advise the Child Advocate on strategy, promote use of and access to the office, and promote a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for children and families.
- Requires the Child Advocate to report annually to the Governor and standing legislative committees.
- The appointment of the first Child Advocate must be made by July 15, 2027.

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on April 16, 2026.

LD 1923, An Act to Update Juvenile Justice System Reporting Requirements and to Direct the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services to Study Modifying the Long Creek Youth Development Center, *Sponsored by Representative Michael Brennan*

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to report the number of youth involved in the youth-justice system each month starting August 15, 2026. The report must include data about the number of system-involved youth who experienced each of the following: referral; diversion; detention; probation; order to serve period of confinement; commitment.
- Requires DOC and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to form a working group to study the current facilities at the Long Creek Youth Development Center. The working group must

provide recommendations for modifying the use of land and facilities at the center and reinvesting corrections funds currently designated for youth incarceration into a continuum of community-based services over the next five years.

- Outlines the working group's membership and responsibilities, including studying other municipalities' modified youth detention centers, considering alternative uses for the center, and exploring community-based organizations to determine programming.
- Requires that, no later than February 15, 2028, DOC and DHHS submit the working group's recommendations and any proposed legislation to a legislative committee focused on criminal justice and public safety.

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on April 3, 2026.

LD 2126. An Act to Eliminate the Juvenile Crime of Willful Refusal to Pay a Fine or Comply with the Terms of a Court Order, *Sponsored by Senator Anne M. Carney*

- Decriminalizes a youth's willful refusal to pay a fine or comply with the terms of a court order.
- Removes from the Maine Juvenile Code any cross-references to the section previously defining such refusals as a juvenile crime.

Signed into law by Governor Mills on March 9, 2026.

Failed Legislation

LD 165. An Act to Modify Discipline Policies in Maine's Public Schools, *Sponsored by Representative William R. Tuell*

- To suspend a child in fifth grade or younger, the amended bill would have required school principals to demonstrate that more time was needed to develop a plan for that child, and that every effort was made to minimize the child's time out of school.

LD 1911. An Act to Automatically Seal Criminal History Record Information for Certain Crimes, *Sponsored by Senator Rachel Talbot Ross*

- As amended, this bill would have made certain misdemeanor convictions eligible for automatic sealing.
- Excludes Class E sexual offenses and various Class D offenses, including certain drug crimes, violations of protective orders, and crimes against family members.
- To be automatically sealed, 5 years must have passed since the eligible misdemeanor conviction.
- Would have required the judiciary to conduct monthly records searches to identify and seal eligible convictions and charges.
- Would have authorized occupational and professional licensing agencies to obtain sealed criminal history record information.

LD 2065. An Act to Provide One-time Funds to Support the Construction of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility for At-risk Youth, *Sponsored by Senator Henry L. Ingwersen*

- This bill would have provided \$1,100,000 to build a psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth aged 21 and under.