



**PUBLIC JUSTICE CENTER ACTION
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2010 SESSION**

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Highlights

As legal advocates for poor people, it is not enough that we simply work within the existing framework of law and procedure. When we encounter unjust laws, laws that do not give Maryland's poor and working families equal access to justice, or laws that try to further erode what rights they do have, we must talk to the lawmakers. The Public Justice Center commands the legislative ear by organizing constituents and allies to testify in Annapolis, by researching and drafting legislation, and by door to door lobbying. We work actively with other advocates, particularly, in this session, with the Job Opportunities Task Force, the ACLU of Maryland, and Maryland Alliance for the Poor. The PJC is an active member of several formal coalitions – Medicaid Matters! Maryland, the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children, and the Education Advocacy Coalition – as well as informal coalitions of tenant, legal services, and civil rights advocates. We are grateful for the assistance of law school students and faculty at the University of Maryland and University of Baltimore. We also were assisted this year by Public Policy Partners, our lobbyists on the ground in Annapolis. And most importantly, we bring our clients down to Annapolis to testify so that legislators see the real people who their decisions affect.

The 2010 Session was busy and largely successful for the PJC. The PJC took a position on 23 bills, with 16 wins and 7 losses.¹ The PJC supported another 21 bills through our formal coalitions, with 15 wins and 6 losses.

In the 2010 Session, the PJC led a number of successful legislative initiatives, exemplified by the following:

¹ A "win" is a good bill that passed or a bad bill that was defeated; a "loss" is a good bill defeated or a bad bill passed.

Tenants in Foreclosure Gain the Right to Continue Their Lease after a Foreclosure and Improved Notices. The PJC's Tenant Advocacy Project has led advocates throughout Maryland in representing tenants who are at risk of eviction because their landlord is in foreclosure. Last year federal law established the right of most tenants to stay in their home for the rest of their lease, even after the property has been sold in foreclosure. As part of the federal stimulus package, however, the federal law had a three year sunset. This year in the led a successful effort to pass legislation that incorporated the favorable federal law into Maryland state law, but without the sunset provision. The new law also amends the state notices that tenants receive to advise them of their new rights.

Clarified Workers' Right to Treble Damages for Nonpayment of Regular and Overtime Wages. The PJC led the effort to add "overtime" to the definition of "wage" under Maryland's Wage Payment and Collection Law (MWPCL). This definitional change was necessary to ensure that a worker's right to treble damages applies to both regular wage and to overtime wage claims.

Defeated An Attempt To Limit Prisoners' Access To Public Information. House Bill 427 was another attempt to limit prisoners' access to public information under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). Specifically, the bill would have changed the definition of a "civil action" for purposes of the Prisoner Litigation Act to include an MPIA judicial enforcement action – meaning that prisoners would have to exhaust a multi-level and burdensome grievance process before able to request public information under the MPIA. The PJC and the ACLU of Maryland joined forces to organize a successful opposition to this bill.

DETAILED SUMMARY OF PJC POSITIONS AND ACTIONS

LOW-WAGE WORKER LEGISLATION

SB 303 / HB 714 – Exemption from Covered Employment for Home Care Workers

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated

The PJC and allies worked to defeat this bill that would have created an exemption from unemployment insurance for home health workers by effectively redefining them as independent contractors. Home care workers are already an exploited and under-paid workforce that is in need of more protection, not less. PJC attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher worked with University of Maryland law clinic students; the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation; AFSCME; Delegate Cheryl Glenn; the National Employment Law Project; and other allies to provide research and testimony, and to lobby against the bill. It was defeated in committee.

HB 214 / SB 694: Amended Definition of Wage in Wage Payment & Collection Law

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed (and bad amendments were defeated)

These bills explicitly add “overtime” to the definition of “wage” under Maryland’s Wage Payment and Collection Law (MWPCCL), to ensure that courts will not allow employers to illegally deny overtime to escape the remedies of the MWPCCL, particularly treble damages remedy available under that statute. Some federal courts had incorrectly held that workers who are unlawfully denied overtime pay can only sue under Maryland’s Wage and Hour Law (MWHL), and that such workers were not eligible for the treble damages available under the MWPCCL. Under this approach, such workers were only entitled to the recovery of the overtime they were originally owed. Now Maryland’s law is clear, and workers’ right to treble damages for nonpayment of wages and overtime is confirmed. PJC attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher presented oral and written testimony, worked with allies and the sponsor, and lobbied hard for this bill.

SB 107 / HB 91: Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed (although business amendments watered it down)

The federal government is providing nearly \$127 million to encourage Maryland to modernize its unemployment insurance (UI) system and help more than 200,000 out-of-work Marylanders who are struggling to meet their most basic needs. The new law:

- Creates an Alternative Base Period (ABP), which provides coverage to workers who are currently denied benefits due to an outdated data collection system that ignores recent work. ABP is estimated to provide \$16.5 million per year in benefits to workers who would otherwise be denied.
- Makes slight technical amendments to the state's existing part-time worker provision.
- Provides an additional 26 weeks of benefits to individuals participating in a state-approved training program for high-demand careers.

PJC Attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher actively supported this bill and sought to stop Chamber of Commerce amendments that reduced its impact by presenting written and oral testimony, conferring with allies on a regular basis, helping to draft an Op-Ed piece, and lobbying.

SB 312 / HB 175: Job Privacy Protection Act

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

This measure had the potential to increase access to much-needed employment opportunities for low-income Marylanders by limiting employers' use of credit checks. About 60% of employers use credit history checks as a tool in their pre-employment screening, even if the information has no relation to the job. Despite the fact that there is no data to show a correlation between bad credit and one's likelihood to commit fraud on the job, the legislation failed after receiving unfavorable committee reports. PJC's Sally Dworak-Fisher worked closely with the Job Opportunity Task Force and provided major support in presenting written and oral testimony, working with the sponsor, sending out grass roots action alerts, and lobbying legislators.

HB 1341: Exempting Messenger Service Business from Paying Unemployment Insurance

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bill Withdrawn After Hearing

PJC Attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher submitted written testimony in opposition to this bill, which would have vastly expanded the definition of "messenger service" under current UI law, and could have exempted courier drivers and others who are currently protected. The bill was withdrawn by the sponsor after the hearing.

HB 379: Transparency in Consumer Arbitrations Act

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Killed

PJC Executive Director John Nethercut submitted written testimony in support of a bill that required arbitration companies to disclose their track record and costs so that consumers and employees could better avoid anti-consumer or anti-employee arbitrators.

HB 825: Requiring Increased Auto Liability Insurance

PJC Position: Opposed

Outcome: Loss, Bad Bill Passed

PJC Attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher presented written testimony against this bill, which would significantly raise the minimum amount of automobile liability insurance required. She argued that the bill would hurt low-wage workers who rely heavily on their cars to get to and from work every day and who can scarcely afford to keep a roof over their heads, much less pay extra for auto insurance.

HB 1371: Public Investment Protection Act

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: None, Bill Submitted for Educational Purposes Only

PJC Attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher testified in favor of the parts of this bill that would apply prevailing wages to state supported projects. Proponents agreed to work on problematic parts of bill but no action was taken on the bill.

TENANT LEGISLATION

HB 711 / SB 654: Tenants in Foreclosure – Incorporating Federal Law into Maryland

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

For the second year, the PJC has led the legislative effort to secure better rights for the thousands of Maryland tenants who are at risk of eviction because their landlord is in foreclosure. Last year legislation was passed that required that tenants be notified when a foreclosure or eviction was in process. Federal law then changed, providing most tenants with the right to stay in the house for the rest of their lease, even after the property has been sold in foreclosure. The federal law, which was part of the stimulus package, had a three year sunset. This year the PJC successfully led legislation that incorporated the favorable federal law into Maryland state law, but without the sunset provision. The new law also amends the state notices that tenants receive to advise them of their new rights. PJC Executive Director John Nethercut and attorney Matt Hill wrote the bill, found sponsors, organized a coalition of supporters and a client to testify at the hearing, sent out Action Alerts to mobilize grassroots support, and lobbied the bill through both Senate and House.

SB 554 / HB 138: Rental Housing -- Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This bill provides significant new protections for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault whose housing is at risk or may need to be changed due to the violence or assault. It allows victims to terminate their lease with 30 days notice to the landlord or to change the locks on the rental unit. Further, the bill allows a victim to defend against a breach of lease claim if the abuser's actions caused the breach of lease. The victim must be able to prove they are a victim of sexual assault or domestic abuse by having a protective order or peace order from a court. PJC Attorney Matt Hill worked with a coalition of housing and domestic violence advocates to draft, negotiate, and lobby this bill through the legislative process. He presented oral and written testimony.

SB 243: Prohibition on Housing Discrimination Based on Source of Income

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

SB 243 would have prohibited landlords from discriminating against potential renters based on the source of their income. Such discrimination is often targeted at those receiving governmental subsidies, such as housing vouchers or disability assistance. Recipients of federal Housing Choice Vouchers ("Section 8") are particularly impacted: after spending years on waiting lists, recipients have a limited time in which to use the voucher they have been granted. If they cannot find a landlord who will accept their voucher, they lose it. PJC participated in the coalition of advocates, led by the Maryland Alliance for the Poor and the Homeless Persons Representation Project, which presented impressive research, a broad array of allies, grassroots mobilization, and testimony at the Senate committee hearing.

HB 669: Mandatory Renters Insurance

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated

PJC Executive Director testified against this bill, which would have allowed landlords to mandate that tenants buy renters insurance themselves or pay the landlord for it as part of rent. While having renters insurance is a good idea if the tenant can afford it and decide on coverage, allowing landlords to mandate insurance is unnecessary and likely to lead to hidden costs and kickbacks.

HB 672 and HB 508: Interest on Security Deposits

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bills Defeated

PJC Executive Director John Nethercut testified against both of these bills, which would have changed the way that interest on tenant security deposits is charged from a flat 3% rate to a floating rate tied to the federal prime interest rate. A floating rate is difficult for landlords and tenants to determine and for courts to enforce.

HB 1153 / SB 504: Lead Paint Dust Testing**PJC Position: Support****Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated**

PJC Attorney Matt Hill supported the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning (CECLP) with this bill to require that landlords use lead paint dust testing at each change of occupancy to verify compliance with the lead paint risk reduction standards.

PRISONER AND JUVENILE JUSTICE LEGISLATION**SB 365 / HB 609 / HB 1260: Charging Juveniles in Gang Activity as Adults****PJC Position: Opposed****Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated**

These bills would have removed from Juvenile Court jurisdiction any juvenile who is alleged to have committed various crimes as a member of a criminal gang. The juvenile would automatically be charged as an adult. PJC Attorney Wendy Hess and PJC Executive Director John Nethercut testified that this bill would greatly expand the number of crimes that would force juveniles into the adult system, and that all evidence shows that charging and incarcerating juveniles as adults leads to increased crime and gang activity, not less. The bill was defeated in committee.

HB 427: Prisoner Litigation Act - Definition of "Civil Action"**PJC Position: Oppose****Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated**

HB 427 was another attempt to limit prisoners' access to public information under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). Specifically, the bill would change the definition of a "civil action" for purposes of the Prisoner Litigation Act to include an MPIA judicial enforcement action – meaning that prisoners would have to exhaust a multi-level and burdensome grievance process before having access to the guarantees of the MPIA. PJC Attorney Wendy Hess worked with the ACLU of Maryland to oppose this bill, including lobbying and presenting oral and written testimony.

HB 583 / SB 772: Adult Detention Center Fees - Frederick County**PJC Position: Oppose****Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated**

PJC Attorney Monisha Cherayil provided written testimony to defeat this bill that would have allowed Frederick County to raise the fee imposed on inmates for medical care from \$4 to \$8 per visit, and to charge \$35 for dental care visits, a \$10 booking fee, a \$10 fee for each day of incarceration, and \$25 for participation in general educational development programs.

SB 499 / HB 1222: Parole & Probation Supervision Fees**PJC Position: Support****Outcome: Loss**

At the request of our ally, the Job Opportunities Task Force, PJC attorney Sally Dworak-Fisher provided written testimony in support of a bill to require the Department of Parole and Probation to provide information to parolees on how to seek an exemption from

supervision fees. The bill passed both houses in different versions, which were not reconciled before the end of the session.

HB 1090 / SB 887: Correctional Officers Bill of Rights

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Loss, Bad Bill Passed (but worst provisions were stripped out)

PJC Attorney Wendy Hess and the ACLU of Maryland opposed provisions of this bill that would make it costly and difficult to investigate or discipline corrections officers in penal institutions.

CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION

SB 28 / HB 816: Honorable Lorraine M. Sheehan Act to Protect Voting Rights for Individuals under Guardianship for Mental Disability

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This bill provides that a person who is under a guardianship for a mental disability may not be disqualified from voting unless a court has found by clear and convincing evidence that the individual cannot communicate, with or without accommodations, a desire to participate in the voting process. PJC Legal Director Debra Gardner submitted written testimony in support of the bill in a coalition effort led by Maryland Disability Law Center.

HB 343: Public Benefits - Requirement of Proof of Lawful Presence

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated

HB 343 sought to require state units and political subdivisions to verify lawful presence of adults applying for federal public benefits or state or local public benefits. PJC Legal Director Debra Gardner submitted written testimony to demonstrate that HB 343 is completely unnecessary, since federal law already dictates that unauthorized immigrants are ineligible for virtually all public benefits, including Temporary Cash Assistance, Medical Assistance, Food Stamps, public and subsidized housing, etc, and instead, would create an expensive burden on local government and deny vulnerable citizens benefits to which they are entitled.

LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

HB 106 / SB 248: Filing Fees Surcharges for Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund

PJC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed, and legal services in Maryland are saved!

This bill will increase the filing fee for civil cases in the Circuit Courts from \$25 to \$70 and in the District Court from \$5 to \$10 for summary ejectment cases and from \$10 to \$20 for all other civil cases. These increases will generate approximately \$6.1 million annually that will be used to fund the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, which in turns provides grants to more than 30 Maryland legal services providers, including the

Public Justice Center. Support of this bill was led by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation and joined by the many Maryland legal services providers, Chief Judge Robert Bell, the Maryland State Bar Association, and many others. The PJC and many other organizations also did grass roots lobbying to ask its supporters to contact legislators in support of the bill and in opposition to various amendments that were offered.

The effect of this bill is significant for legal services in Maryland, but an amendment tacked onto the final bill gives some pause for concern. The MLSC budget is part of the Judiciary's overall budget request to the General Assembly, because lawyers and legal services are supervised by the courts, not the legislative branch. However, the bill requires that the MLSC annually disclose its budget to the General Assembly along with information on its grantees and their "performance measurement data that details the use of funds." The PJC and other legal services organizations that advocate for systemic reforms on behalf of Marylanders living in poverty hope that this disclosure requirement in the name of legislative oversight does not become an effort to politicize and chill the representation of our clients' interests.

Budget Language: Funding Contingent on Disclosure for Law School Clinic Programs

PJC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, mostly (funding contingency dropped, disclosure requirement survived)

Budget language was submitted proposing to make the funding of the University of Maryland School of Law's Environmental Law Clinic contingent on disclosure of client and other information. This was an attempt by Eastern Shore legislators to chill the clinic after they brought an environmental lawsuit against farmers, including Perdue, for violation of the Clean Water Act. The PJC and the Maryland Disability Law Center organized the legal services community to sign a joint letter of opposition. Opposition also came from the American Bar Association and from academics. In negotiation, the funding contingency was dropped and the disclosure requirement lessened.

HEALTH LEGISLATION

**Actions taken by the Public Justice Center through the Medicaid Matters !
Maryland Coalition**

HB 1027: Gender Equity Health Coverage Act

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

This bill would have prohibited insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations from making or allowing a differential in ratings, premium payments, or dividends for a reason based on the sex of an applicant or policyholder. It was voted down in committee and then withdrawn by the sponsor.

SB 711 / HB 832: The Lorraine Sheehan Health & Community Services Act of 2010

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

This bill would have increased the alcohol tax by 10¢ and deposits 42.25% of funds raised into new Medicaid Trust Fund to pay for childless adult services. In spite of strong lobbying by MM!MD, this bill was not voted on by either the House or Senate committee and thus died. The support generated, however, may bid well for future passage.

SB 855 / HB 929: Patient-Centered Medical Home Program

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This Administration bill authorizes the Health Care Commission to establish the Patient-Centered Medical Home Program where primary care practices are organized to provide first, coordinated, ongoing and comprehensive sources of care to patients.

HB 849: Home- & Community-Based Services Waiver – Denial of Access

Prohibited

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed!

This will prohibits the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene from denying waiver services to individuals who are living in a nursing facility at the time of application for the waiver and who are eligible for 30 days of nursing facility services. This bill could remove access barriers to long term care in the community.

HB 1375: Express Lane Eligibility Act

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This bill makes it easier for eligible families to apply for the Maryland Children Health Program (MCHP). The bill makes permanent the requirement that the Comptroller send the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) information from tax returns of potentially eligible children for Medicaid and MCHP. Based on this information, DHMH is required to send applications and enrollment instructions for Medicaid and MCHP to the taxpayer.

SB 279 / HB 525: Maryland False Health Claims Act of 2010

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This Administration bill prohibits persons from making a false claim for payment by the State or DHMH under a State health plan or program; authorizes the State to file a civil action against a person who makes a false claim; establishes civil penalties; permits private citizens to file civil action on behalf of the State against a person who makes a false claim, and requires the court to award a portion of the proceeds to the private citizen who initiated the action.

SB 521 / HB 1358: Family Planning Works Act

PJC / MM!MD Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

This bill would have required family planning coverage for all women with incomes below 250% of the poverty line. The intent of the General Assembly is that any long-term savings from this Act be used to keep open Upper Shore Community Health Center. The bill was voted down in the House Committee and then withdrawn by the sponsor.

CHILDREN'S LEGISLATION

Positions Taken by the Public Justice Center through the Coalition to Protect Maryland Children (CPMC)

HB 11 / SB 204: Student Stigma Act

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This bill changes references to children in special education proceedings from "emotional disturbance" to "emotional disability."

HB 94 / SB 108: Hearings in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) Cases

PJC / CPMC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated

Rhonda Lipkin presented oral and written testimony in opposition to this bill, which would have limited the ability of parties in Juvenile Court to have evidence heard by judges by taking away the right to have hearings de novo (new trials) when filing exceptions from masters' decisions. The bills were voted down in the House and Senate committees.

HB 161 / SB 137: Family Law - Permanency Planning and Guardianship Review Hearings - Consultation with Child

PJC / CPMC Position: Support with Amendments

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

Rhonda Lipkin presented oral and written testimony (1) to oppose allowing the Juvenile Court to delegate the responsibility of judges and masters to consult directly with children and (2) supporting the extension of the requirement of consulting with children to guardianship review hearings. The favorable amendments were adopted, and the bill then passed.

SB 252 / HB 500: Revision to Child Support Guidelines

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

Rhonda Lipkin presented written testimony in support of this bill, which gives the first increase in child support payments in decades.

HB 269 / SB 540: Child with a Disability - Individualized Education Program

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

CPMC presented written and oral testimony in support of this bill that requires school systems to provide documents to parents five days before special education (IEP) meetings.

SB 330 / HB 173: Human Services - Quality Care - Juvenile Facilities

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

CPMC filed written testimony in support of this bill, which limits the size of juvenile facilities to 48 youth unless there is "good cause" to allow a larger size.

HB 394: Juvenile Services - Programming and Services for Females

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

CPMC presented oral and written testimony in favor of requiring juvenile services programming and services for females be comparable to that offered to males. The bill was never voted on in committee and died.

SB 465 / HB 900: Developmental Disabilities Administration - Recipient

Reevaluations

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

Rhonda Lipkin offered written testimony in support of this bill to permit reconsideration to determine if more services for developmentally disabled persons are needed and to require notice and right to hearing. The bill was passed in amended form to allow for appeals from denial of services.

SB 478 / HB 554: Residential Child Care Facilities - Incident Reporting -

Interagency Workgroup

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

CPMC provided written support for this bill to establish an interagency workgroup charged with developing uniform incident reporting guidelines.

HB 534 / SB 867: Domestic Violence - Protective Order - Extension

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

CPMC filed written testimony in support of authorizing a judge to extend the term of a protective order. The bill passed in amended form, allowing for an extension for up to two years from the date the extension is granted under specified circumstances.

SB 757 / HB 962: Criminalizing Child Neglect

PJC / CPMC Position: Oppose

Outcome: Win, Bad Bill Defeated

CPMC presented written and oral testimony opposing this bill, which would have created a complicated scheme for criminalizing neglect with large loopholes for certain classes of individuals. PJC has opposed this and past bills criminalizing neglect because (1) there are already laws criminalizing reckless or intentional behaviors that result in physical harm to children; and (2) criminalizing neglect per se is likely to have a chilling effect on people or their families seeking assistance if they are afraid of being charged with a crime. The bills ultimately died.

SB 948 / HB 1141: Disclosure of Information in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

CPMC led the support of this bill to require a director of a local department of social services or the Secretary of Human Resources to disclose information concerning child abuse and neglect that resulted in a child suffering a fatality or a near fatality.

HB 1160: Safe Schools Act of 2010

PJC / CPMC Position: Oppose specific provisions concerning neglected and abused children

Outcome: Partial Win, Bill Passed in Amended Form

This bill required the Juvenile Court to notify school officials that a child has been found to be delinquent, in need of assistance, or in need of supervision, has been committed to an agency's supervision or is no longer committed. Rhonda Lipkin presented written testimony in opposition to the mandatory reporting as unnecessary and in violation of a child's right to privacy. The bill was amended in the final moments of the session to make the reporting optional at the discretion of the Juvenile Court judge.

HB 1245: Closure of the Waxter Center

PJC / CPMC Position: Support

Outcome: Loss, Good Bill Defeated

Rhonda Lipkin drafted testimony in support of closing the Waxter Center, a woefully outdated residential facility for girls charged with delinquent offenses and girls committed to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Services after being found delinquent. DJS itself has found that "conditions there are unsuitable for serving Maryland Youth." The bill was defeated with promises that the facility will be closed but not in the near future due to financial constraints.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Actions taken by the Public Justice Center through the Education Advocacy Coalition

SB 540 / HB 269

PJC / EAC Position: Support

Outcome: Win, Good Bill Passed

This bill requires school systems to provide parents with relevant documents and information in advance of proceedings concerning special education Individualized Education Programs for their children so that the parents can be prepared to advocate for their children in such proceedings.