

JJAG Legislative Action Plan

132nd Maine Legislature (2025 – 2026)

The JJAG can play an important role in educating policymakers in order to help align Maine’s approach to juveniles with JJAG’s current three-year plan. The JJAG Legislative Committee is charged with making recommendations for JJAG action on proposed and/or pending legislation. The Committee has developed the following plan to guide JJAG engagement during the 132nd Maine Legislature.

Initial LR/LD Screening and Identification

The Center for Youth Policy and Law (CYP&L) at the University of Maine School of Law maintains a legislative tracker during each legislative session that identifies juvenile justice related legislation when it is proposed. CYP&L has agreed to make this available to the JJAG to support our work. This will be a starting point for determining what proposed legislation should be discussed by the Legislative Committee and, if appropriate, brought before the JJAG to consider whether it would be appropriate for the JJAG to provide information or take a position. In addition, any member of the JJAG can request that the Legislative Committee discuss any particular piece of legislation that might be relevant to the work of the JJAG.

Committee Process

The Committee will meet at least monthly starting in December of each year and through the end of each legislative year. For the foreseeable future, these meetings will be conducted remotely and are open to all JJAG members as well as the public. The zoom link will be posted along with the links for other JJAG meetings and committee meetings. They are currently scheduled from 8-9AM on the first Tuesday of each month.

Choosing bills for action: When identifying bills for possible JJAG action the Committee will consider:

1. Alignment with current three-year plan goals:
 - a) The JJAG will leverage available federal resources in collaboration with other stakeholders to allocate resources and support efforts to develop and maintain a community-based continuum of care that includes more effective crisis responses, higher education and employment opportunities for upward mobility, mental health support, and tribal engagement for Maine youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system
 - b) The JJAG will leverage available federal resources to support efforts to improve system policies and procedures consistent with national best practices and recommendations in the [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#). Informed by the R/ED & Gender Report, our goal is to become more present in policy guidance, allowing the expertise of board members and community input to steer our juvenile justice system.
 - c) The JJAG will leverage available federal resources to elevate and amplify the voices of youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system by supporting youth-focused events, establishing a database/network of youth-based organizations, and providing scholarships to system-involved youth authentically engaged in reform efforts.;

2. JJAG's ability to bring a unique perspective related to the bill's substance;
3. The likelihood of JJAG's action impacting the path of the bill; and
4. The capacity of JJAG to develop and deliver testimony and to participate in subsequent work-sessions as needed.

Determining and proposing positions: The Committee will determine whether to recommend JJAG testimony on a particular bill. Recommended positions on bills will be determined by informal consensus of the Committee members present.

- a) If proposed legislation is aligned with the current JJAG three-year plan, the Committee may recommend that the JJAG support it on that basis.
- b) If proposed legislation is not aligned with the current JJAG three-year plan, the Committee may recommend testimony in opposition on that basis.
- c) If the Committee is unable to reach consensus (or believes the full JJAG will not reach consensus) but still believes that the JJAG has important information to provide, the Committee may recommend testimony "neither for nor against" the bill. In this case, the Committee will recommend providing testimony which represents the range of views held by the members of the JJAG on the issue. The "neither for nor against" position may also be proposed when the Committee does not want recommend taking a position on the bill but wants to provide information on one or more of its sections.

The Committee will agree on the key talking points to be presented to the JJAG and will determine who will be responsible for drafting the testimony and/or delivering the testimony.

JJAG Process

The Legislative Committee Chair, Co-Chairs, and/or their designee will be responsible for presenting the Committee's recommendations to the full JJAG. When possible, information will be provided to members in advance of the next JJAG meeting. The presentation will include:

- The LD (or LR) number
- The title of the bill
- The sponsor of the bill
- A brief summary of the bill
- The recommended position – in support, in opposition, neither for nor against
- The testimony talking points
- Who will draft the testimony (*if known*)
- Who will deliver the testimony (*if known*)

Positions taken by the JJAG to support or oppose legislation must be supported by a unanimous vote of those present (not including members recused or abstaining). In the case that the membership does not vote unanimously but still believes that the JJAG has important information to provide, the JJAG may still provide testimony "neither for nor against" the bill which outlines the range of positions held by its membership.

Sharing Testimony

After testimony is completed and/or delivered, it will be shared with JJAG members for their information via the listserv and/or with the next meeting materials.

Post Session Review

After the close of each year of the session, but before the beginning of the next legislative year, the committee will meet to review the previous year's work and make adjustments to this plan as deemed necessary.

Legislative Template

The following language will be included in all testimony submitted by the JJAG:

Maine's Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) was created in accordance with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 ("the JJDPA"). The mission of the JJAG is to advise and make recommendations to state policy makers and to promote effective system level responses that further the goals of the JJDPA. The JJAG is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the four core protections of the JJDPA and with administering the federal funds that come to Maine annually through the JJDPA which are distributed largely through subgrants to entities performing activities that are aligned with the JJAG's 3-year plan. For more information about the JJAG, our members, and our work, please visit:

<https://www.jjagmaine.com/>

Members of the JJAG are appointed by the Governor to fill the required slots identified in federal law. Some of the individuals on the JJAG work in state government, and the Commissioners of the Departments of Corrections, Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Public Safety, or their designees, serve as *ex-officio* voting members of the JJAG. When the JJAG takes votes related to legislative matters, executive branch employees may decide to abstain from these votes to avoid creating any confusion or the impression that the JJAG is speaking for any of the various Departments.