

Youth Justice Legislative Update 2025

The following is a summary of youth justice legislation and reforms that were enacted, carried over, or failed to pass during the First Session of the 132nd Legislature, which adjourned on March 21, 2025, and June 25, 2025, respectively. The general effective date for non-emergency laws passed in the First Special Session of the 132nd Legislature is September 24, 2025. The second regular session of the 132nd Legislature will convene in January 2026.

Enacted Legislation

LD 42, An Act Regarding the Bind-over and Detention of Juveniles, Sponsored by Representative Suzanne Salisbury

- Allows the Department of Corrections to request a bound-over youth be detained in a juvenile facility after reaching age 18 and provides that a person may not be detained in a juvenile facility after reaching age 21.

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on June 18, 2025.

LD 1113, An Act Regarding Fairness in Sentencing for Persons Based on Age, Sponsored by Representative Sophia Warren

- Prohibits a person from being sentenced to imprisonment for life without the possibility of supervised community confinement after a period of 15 years when the conduct underlying the sentence occurred before age 26.

Became law without the Governor's signature on June 24, 2025.

LD 1248, An Act Regarding Physical Escort and Restraint and Seclusion of Students in Schools, Sponsored by Holly Sargent

- Removes the word “voluntary” from the definition of “physical escort” in the law regarding physical restraint and seclusion in school. Physical escort now means “temporary touching or holding of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back to induce a student to walk to a safe location.”

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on June 11, 2025.

LD 1849, An Act to Establish a Minimum Age at Which Conduct Constitutes a Juvenile Crime and to Confer Jurisdiction to the Juvenile Courts Over Any Criminal Offense Under Maine Law Committed by a Juvenile, Sponsored by Representative Suzanne Salisbury

- Establishes a minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction by amending the definition of a “juvenile” to mean a person who has attained 11 years of age but not 18 years of age. For murder, felony murder and manslaughter, and the criminal attempt of those crimes, there is no minimum age.
- Provides that all offenses committed by a juvenile are considered juvenile offenses and original in juvenile, rather than adult, court.

Signed into law as amended by Governor Mills on June 27, 2025.

Approved Legislation

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*

Replaces LD 1097, *An Act to Provide De-escalation and Behavior Intervention Training for School Personnel*, with a resolve that requires that the Department of Education convene a group of teachers and experts in de-escalation and behavior intervention to develop best practices for training to be distributed to all schools. ***Approved by the legislature on June 25, 2025. Awaiting further action by the Governor.***

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

Replaces LD 1098, *An Act to Ensure Equal Access to a Full School Day for All Students* with a resolve that establishes requirements for when a school may place a student in an abbreviated school day program. The requirements do not apply when students have been removed from school pursuant to disciplinary procedures.

Approved by the legislature on June 9, 2025. Awaiting further action by the Governor.

Carried Over Legislation

LD 102, An Act to Notify the Public of Juveniles Who Are Wanted Persons, *Sponsored by Representative Michel Lajoie*

- Allows criminal justice agencies to release a wanted or escaped youth's record information including the youth's name, date of birth, physical description, photograph, location of alleged escape, alleged crime, and level of public safety risk when the youth has escaped from custody or has an arrest warrant alleging certain crimes including misdemeanors.
- Allows record information to be released if the youth had attained 18 years of age at the time of the alleged escape.

LD 740, An Act to Establish a Comprehensive Program to Divert Youth from the Criminal Justice System and Address Their Needs, *Sponsored by Representative Grayson Lookner*

- Establishes a process for allowing a law enforcement officer to refer a youth to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for a needs assessment designed to identify the supports and services needed to promote child and family well-being.
- Requires DHHS to refer the juvenile to high-fidelity wraparound care coordination services if the juvenile has complex behavioral health needs and is involved or is at risk of becoming involved with multiple service systems.
- Establishes requirements for petitions issued prior to, in conjunction with, or following a referral for a juvenile needs assessment.
- Establishes criteria for the use of the report and recommendations based on the juvenile needs assessment in adjudicatory hearings.
- Stipulates that statements made by a juvenile or juvenile's parents, guardian, or legal custodian to a law enforcement or juvenile community corrections officer related to whether to refer the juvenile to DHHS are not admissible in evidence at an adjudicatory hearing against that juvenile.
- Directs DHHS to establish a stakeholder group to assist in implementing the juvenile needs assessment and train relevant persons on matters related to the needs assessment.

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 agency with jurisdiction over all children's services by the state.
- Endows the Child Advocate with various authorities, including making recommendations and advising the Governor and the public on the best interests of children.

LD 1923, An Act to Repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center and Build a Community System of Support, Sponsored by Representative Michael Brennan

- Requires that the Long Creek Youth Development Center be repurposed into a secure residential treatment facility to provide services for system-involved and at-risk youth no later than January 1, 2027.
- Requires that the State redirect funds from the Department of Corrections' juvenile corrections and services budgets to fund community-based services for youth.
- Requires DOC and DHHS to convene a working group to study options and best practices for repurposing Long Creek Youth Development Center.
- Authorizes funding for repurposing Long Creek Youth Development Center as a secure residential treatment facility. The residential treatment facility is to establish two community-based programs: one supporting youth leaving the Center, and one that provides an alternative to the Center.
- Requires the DOC to publish monthly data regarding the number of system-involved youth.

Failed Legislation

LD 165, An Act to Allow School Boards to Expel or Suspend Students Regardless of Grade Level,

Sponsored by Representative William Tuell

Allows a school board to expel or suspend a student regardless of grade level.

LD 535, An Act to Authorize Judicial Disposition of a Juvenile Adjudicated of Murder or a Class A Crime to a Term of Commitment Extending Beyond the Juvenile's 21st Birthday, Sponsored by

Representative Kenneth Fredette

- Allows a court to impose sentences on youth that include commitment beyond age 21.
- Provides factors to determine whether to impose a sentence of commitment beyond age 21, including age and maturity, rehabilitation potential, prior criminal history, victim and community impact, and psychological assessments.