STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Wes Moore

DIRECTIVE

TO: Secretary Betsy Fox Tolentino, Department of Juvenile Services

CC: Lester Davis, Chief of Staff
Manny Welsh, Principal Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Administrative Officer
Travis Nelson, Deputy Chief of Staff

FROM: Governor Wes Moore

RE: Directive – Targeted Interventions and Rapid Response for Youth Motor Vehicle Theft

DATE: October 13, 2026

Building on the success of my May 2026 Safe Summer Directive, which effectively strengthened multi-agency coordination to reduce youth violence across Maryland and diverted several instances of "teen takeovers", I'm calling for the expansion of targeted efforts to address youth-involved motor vehicle thefts.

Public safety is my top priority and I am concerned by the recent frequency of motor vehicle thefts involving youth and young children. Most tragically recent incidents have resulted in severe injuries and fatalities across our communities.We cannot wait for a tragic crash to be the first point of meaningful intervention. We must act decisively to interrupt this pattern of behavior before more lives are lost.

Pursuant to my authority as the head of the executive branch of State government under Article II, Section 1 of the Maryland Constitution, as well as Section 3-302 of the State Government Article of the Maryland Code, I hereby direct the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) to coordinate immediate strategic action to launch a targeted, multi-agency intervention in

partnership with relevant Maryland law enforcement agencies and departments. DJS, in partnership with relevant agencies and departments, should:

- Immediately develop and implement a pilot program for rapid, coordinated responses to youth-involved motor vehicle thefts in Montgomery County and Baltimore City–areas that are currently experiencing the highest increases in motor vehicle thefts compared to 2025. This program will establish a mechanism to immediately identify children who engage in, or are at elevated risk for motor vehicle theft, and deploy swift, coordinated intervention involving the child, family, social service providers, and local law enforcement partners. The program should leverage existing "Youth of Concern" interagency meeting infrastructure to connect identified youth to prevention efforts.

- Immediately develop and implement a specialized early intervention pathway tailored for young children, particularly those involved in stolen vehicle incidents or related circumstances who cannot be formally charged in criminal cases. Intervention strategies will target these youth and others displaying concerning behaviors before formal charges arise. DJS will collaborate closely with local law enforcement, social workers, and school personnel to identify these children and deliver targeted support services.

- In the longer-term, explore adaptation of a model program, similar to the Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project (St. Paul, MN), that pairs a dedicated law enforcement team with community navigators and credible messengers to engage high-risk youth and families, building on DJS's existing Thrive initiative framework.

An initial status report is due to Deputy Chief of Staff Travis Nelson, by December 1, 2026.

The Governor's Office remains fully committed to ensuring every young person in Maryland is given the support and boundaries necessary to thrive, while keeping our roads and communities safe. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to Maryland's youth.

This Directive is effective as of the date indicated above, and shall remain in force until further notice.

Wes Moore
Governor of the State of Maryland