



CUYAHOGA COUNTY OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

Chief Public Defender – Cullen Sweeney

July 26, 2024

Cuyahoga County Council
Public Safety & Justice Affairs
Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee
Janine Carter, County Council Clerk: jdcarter@cuyahogacounty.us

Dear Chair Honorable Ronald Adrine, Vice-Chair Jennifer Blumhagen Yarham, and Members of the Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee:

I want to express my appreciation for your willingness to serve on an advisory subcommittee tasked with the critical responsibility of conducting a review of our County's juvenile justice system to identify areas for improvement. It is hard to conceive of many endeavors that are more critical to the health, wellbeing, and future of our community.

Given our role as advocates for hundreds of children and families navigating the criminal justice system, the Public Defender's Office is uniquely positioned to serve as a resource to the work of this committee. Our Office consists of 29 attorneys, five social workers, and several other staff – many of whom have worked in juvenile court for decades. We have seen what works for kids in the juvenile justice system and also seen where the system comes up short. Beyond our day-to-day experience, we are connected to a statewide network of juvenile defenders and have participated in numerous trainings throughout the years, highlighting best practices in juvenile justice. I believe that our collective expertise could be helpful to the subcommittee's work.

As such, I would like to offer our support and assistance to the important work of this subcommittee. We are happy to engage with the subcommittee in whatever way would be helpful and will be attending its meetings going forward. On behalf of the kids we represent, we want to see this subcommittee succeed and provide tangible recommendations to improve our juvenile court system.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Sam Amata, our juvenile division chief, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Cullen Sweeney

Cullen Sweeney
Chief Public Defender

