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Glendening, Parris N.

Another fund request for juvenile office; Glendening adds \$7.4 million more to aid delinquents; Would be largest increase; Permanent secretary may be named in next several days

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SUN STAFF

Continuing a push to **overhaul** the state Department of **Juvenile** Justice, Gov. Parris N. Glendening said yesterday he will propose new spending that would give the agency one of the largest budget increases in its history.

Legislators have indicated that any funding increases could be influenced by the governor's permanent choice to lead the agency. Bishop L. Robinson, the interim secretary since December, is negotiating with his employer, Lockheed Martin Corp., to enable him to become the permanent secretary, sources have told The Sun.

Glendening said an announcement about the position could come in a few days. Robinson, former state public safety chief and Baltimore police commissioner, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The governor also said he was considering a recommendation by Robinson to close the Cheltenham Youth Facility, the severely overcrowded **juvenile** jail in Prince George's

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County that children's advocates have long called dangerous and inhumane.

Glendening said he would make a decision on Cheltenham "as soon as possible," but he added that he already has ordered that no additional long-term spending go toward its maintenance.

Under the increased spending plan for **juvenile** justice, the governor said he will ask for \$7.4 million in a supplemental budget to be forwarded to legislators. The money would be in addition to a \$16 million increase the governor outlined in his original budget request. The money would come from the state's general fund.

More than \$2.5 million of the total increase would go to improve the state's probation **system**, which a task force reported last month is unable to keep track of released delinquents and often is unwilling to treat or punish those delinquents who commit offenses again.

"No matter what happens, we have to remember that we have a tough job ahead of us," Glendening said in an interview. "We have so far to go. There's no question in my mind."

Glendening and Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, his point person on criminal issues, have made a series of changes at the agency since December, when The Sun published a series that described assaults by guards on youth at some of the agency's three boot camps in western Maryland and its probation **system** as ineffective.

In the immediate wake of those reports, the governor and lieutenant governor ousted Gilberto de Jesus, the agency's secretary, along with the undersecretary, three aides and more than a dozen guards. They formed two task forces -- one looking at violence reported at the boot camps and the other concentrating on probation programs, which are known as after-care.

Following the report from the boot camp task force, the governor and lieutenant governor ordered the boot camps ended. And last month, the task force looking at after-care issues made a series of recommendations that Glendening and Townsend said would be addressed by the supplemental budget announced yesterday.

'Pushing ahead'

"What we understand is when there's attention on **juvenile** justice, we can make reforms," Townsend said. "There's now a great deal of attention on **juvenile** justice, and so we're going to push ahead."

Among the items that would be funded under the supplemental budget request:

A new deputy secretary position, charged with seeing that agency employees follow policies, including those on physical restraint, which were violated at the boot camps.

Four investigators to help protect teens from assaults by staff and two ombudsmen to monitor the agency's facilities.

Computer software and personnel to help track youth who have been released to the community. Under the current **system**, tracking youth and their prior offenses has been spotty.

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Creating a sex offender unit at the Charles H. Hickey Jr. School licensed as a Residential Treatment Center.

Additional positions for youth counselors and guards at the Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center, J. DeWeese Carter Center and the Waxter Children's Center. Cheltenham would get three new employees to address mental health issues.

About \$1 million to pay for agency cost overruns from last year.

Shifting focus

Jim McComb, chairman of the Maryland **Juvenile** Justice Coalition, an umbrella group of child advocacy groups, said he was pleased at the funding increase but wants more details on how the money would be spent.

His group has been encouraging the **juvenile** justice agency to place more delinquents in community-based programs rather than in **juvenile** jails and to increase programs to help with substance abuse and mental health.

"I think the state is planning to do some serious spending on **juvenile** justice, and a lot of it looks, preliminarily at least, like it's well placed," he said. "This is the first budget that I can remember that places a substantial effort on after-care, mental health, that kind of stuff."

Including the supplemental budget, the agency would receive about \$146 million from the general fund. With federal contributions and other sources, the agency would have a total budget of about \$162 million. That would drive its general fund increase to about 18 percent and its overall budget increase to about 16.5 percent -- a far greater increase than any other state agency is likely to get this year.

Most state agencies are expecting about a 4 percent increase.

Aside from the agency's overall budget increase, the governor has asked for a one-time payment of \$7 million to build a residential center for delinquents in Hagerstown.

Past increases for the **juvenile** justice agency have gone as high as 16 percent, but none in memory has been as steep as Glendening's current request, said Bob Kannenberg, a spokesman for the Department of **Juvenile** Justice.

The governor and lieutenant governor said they support four of five **juvenile** justice bills that remain before the legislature. They oppose a bill that would create an oversight commission to monitor the **juvenile** justice agency.

Townsend said they were against the bill because it would create more bureaucracy.