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May 11, 2026

Via Email Only

Columbus City Council
c/o Finance Director
Angelica Alexander
aalexander@columbusga.org

Dear Council Members,

I am the incoming Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court of the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit, having been selected by the Superior Court Judges for the term beginning July 1, 2026. The Superior Court has also appointed Mr. Christopher Williams as the other incoming full-time judge and Mr. Thomas Tebeau as the incoming part-time Judge, both of whom will also take office July 1, 2026.

The Juvenile Court is requesting additional funds in the budget to move our current part time Judge, who is listed as a 3 day a week part-time position, to full-time. A third full time Judge will provide the children and families in the Court with a faster and more efficient path to permanency in dependency cases, increased focus by the Court to each family during the pendency of a case, and a more manageable caseload in line with national model rules.

The outgoing Juvenile Court Judges planned to come to council to ask for an added full-time judicial position, in addition to the 2 full-time and one part-time position we have now, but we are not asking for an entirely new position to be created at this time. We are simply requesting that part-time position be moved to a full-time position, which is not as financially impactful to the city as an entirely new position.

The Juvenile Court handles dependency and delinquency proceedings involving children in our area. Dependency proceedings involve children that have been removed from the care of their parents or legal custodians and placed in the legal custody of the Department of Family and Children Services. Delinquency proceedings involve children that have been charged with a crime as well as children charged with CHINS offenses (Children in Need of Services), which are status offenses (truancy, unruly/ungovernable, and runaway).

Currently in Muscogee County alone there are approximately 430 children in foster care. In the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit, there are almost 500 children in care. We have averaged well over 500 children in care for over a year if not longer, even approaching 560 children in March of last year.

Our dependency caseload far exceeds that of comparable jurisdictions. In 2025, Savannah had an average of 291 foster children and the Hall County Circuit in Gainesville averaging 272 children in care. These circuits have comparable child populations to our area, but half the number

of children in care. These circuits also have more judges on the bench, with Savannah having 3 full time Judges and 3 part-time Judges and Gainesville having three full time Judges. Moving the part-time position to full-time is needed to address the backlog and to move cases and children towards permanency in a timely fashion.

Local delinquency numbers are also much higher than comparable jurisdictions. In 2024, Muscogee County filed 1,298 petitions for delinquency compared to 647 petitions in Savannah and 409 petitions in the Hall County Circuit. With three full time Judges, each Judge will have their own docket, allowing the Court to provide more attention to each child and family. The Court will also be working to partner with local school districts to provide services to children and families both before and after they have a case before the Court.

For the past 15 years, one Judge has handled all dependency cases, and one has handled all delinquency cases. Model rules suggest that this does not provide for a Judge to truly know the case or the child, when there are so many cases before them each week. With one Judge handling all cases there is simply not enough time to address all concerns in each case and to adequately move the case through the judicial process. The incoming Juvenile Court bench wishes to move to a schedule that each Judge has their own delinquency and dependency docket, which will allow a better distribution of cases so that each Judge can better manage their docket and be more involved with each family. However, for this plan to be implemented and be successful, we need 3 full time Judges.

We understand that each department in the city comes before council each year asking for additional funds. However, we believe these funds to support the bench in Juvenile Court are vital to the community, to allow the personnel to implement programs both inside and outside of the courtroom to serve the children in our area. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Amy C. Walters



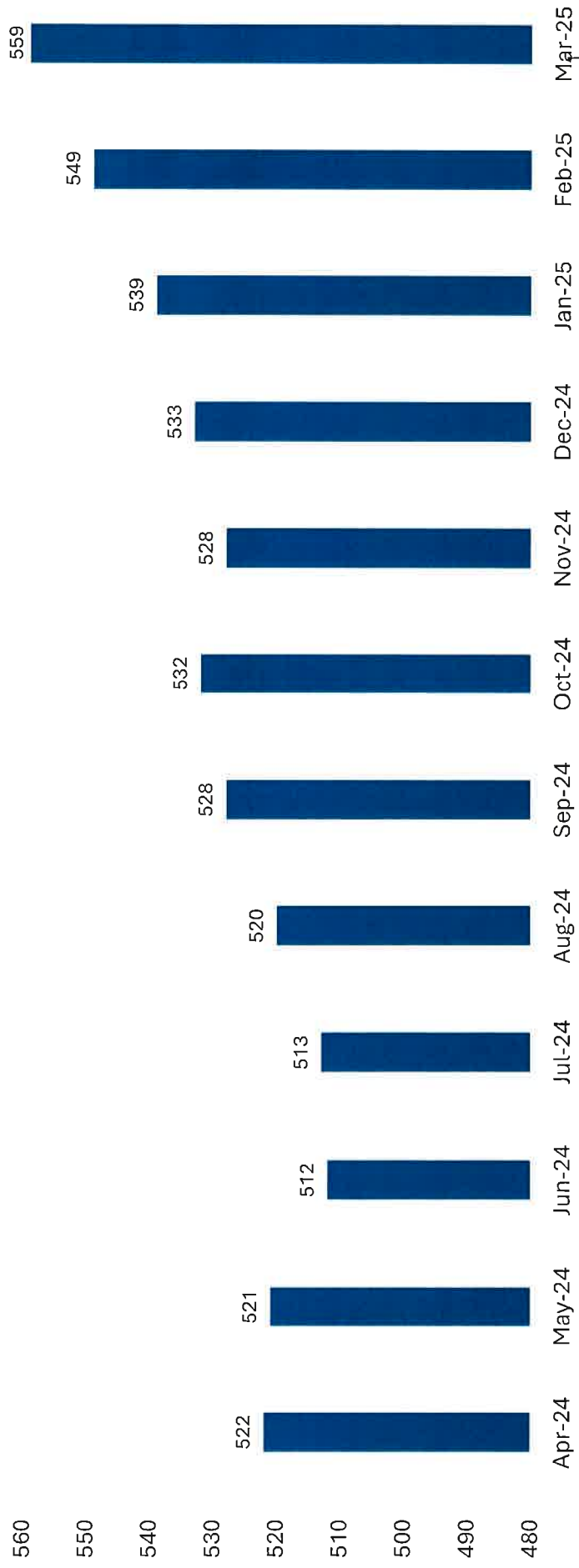
Christopher Williams



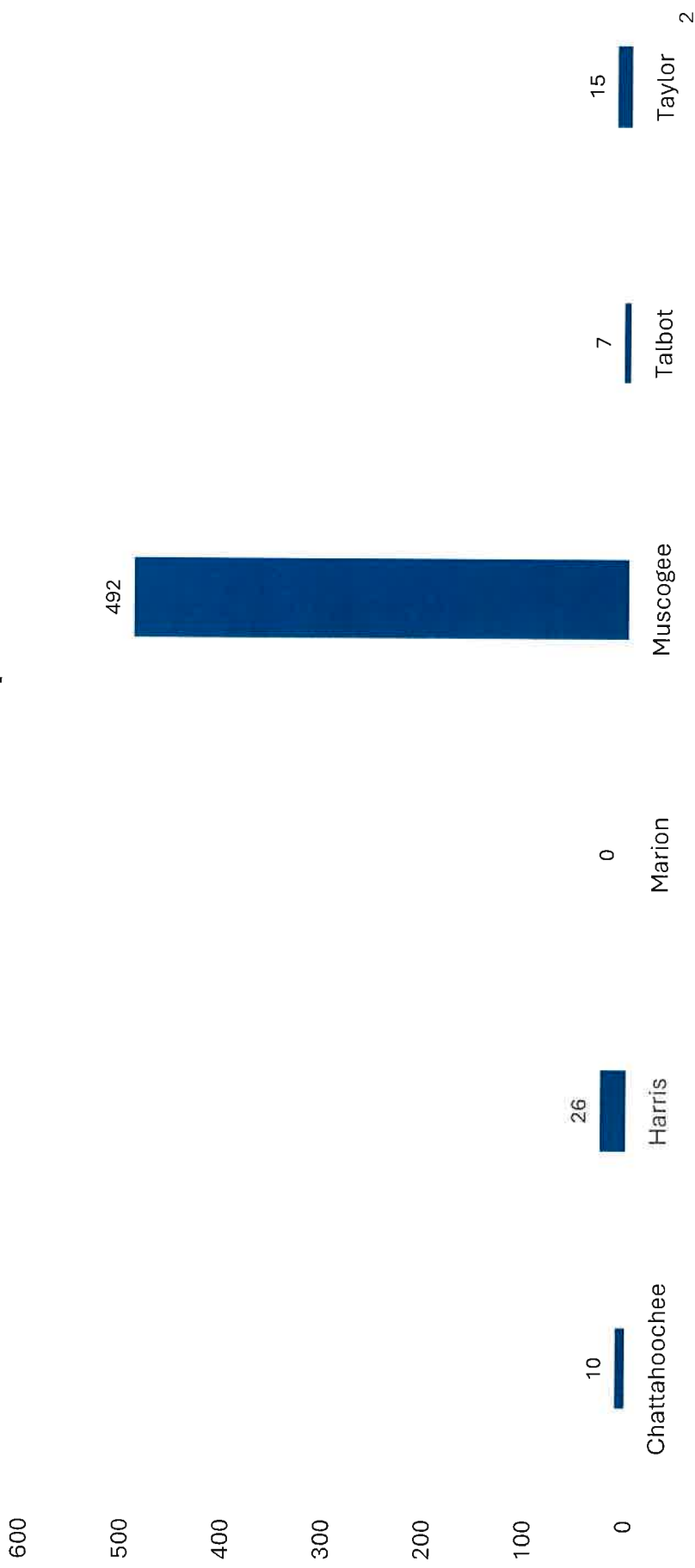
Thomas Tebeau

AVERAGE DAILY CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN ACTUAL NUMBERS CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

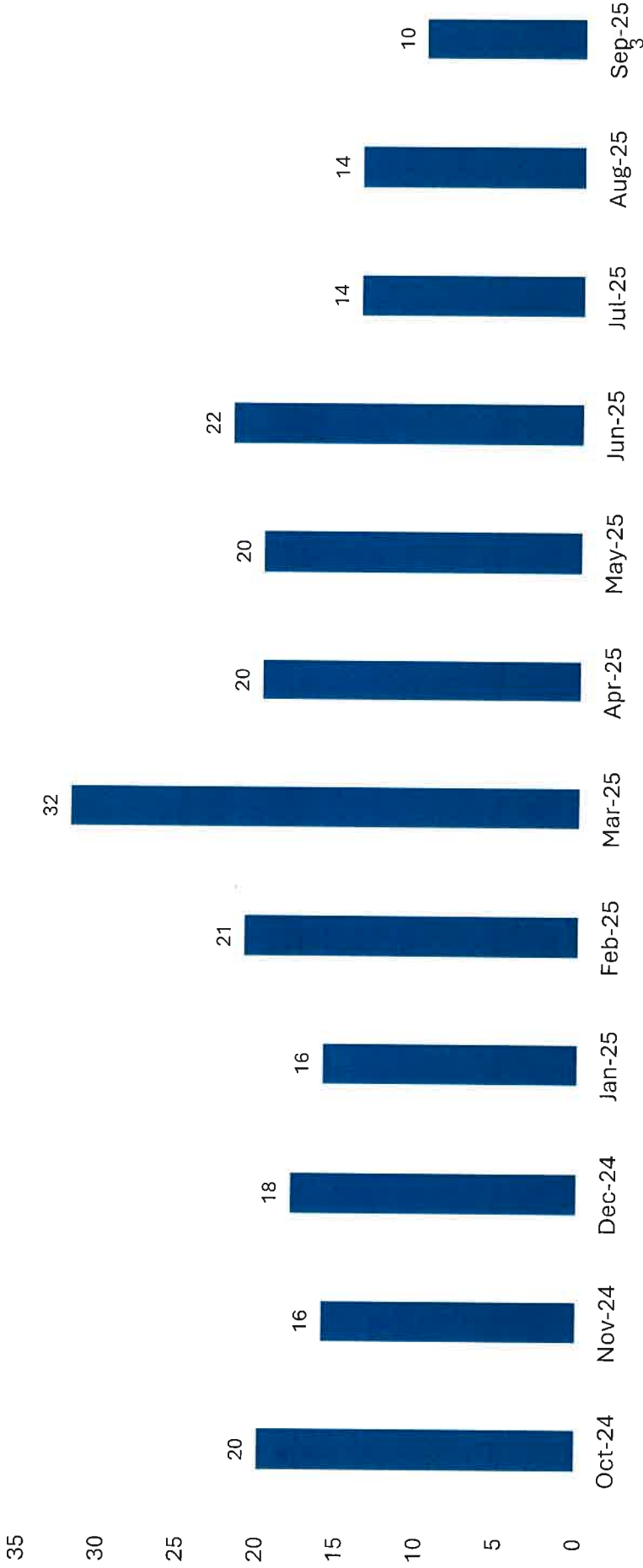
April 2024 – March 2025



AVERAGE DAILY CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY COUNTY – CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT October 2024 – September 2025

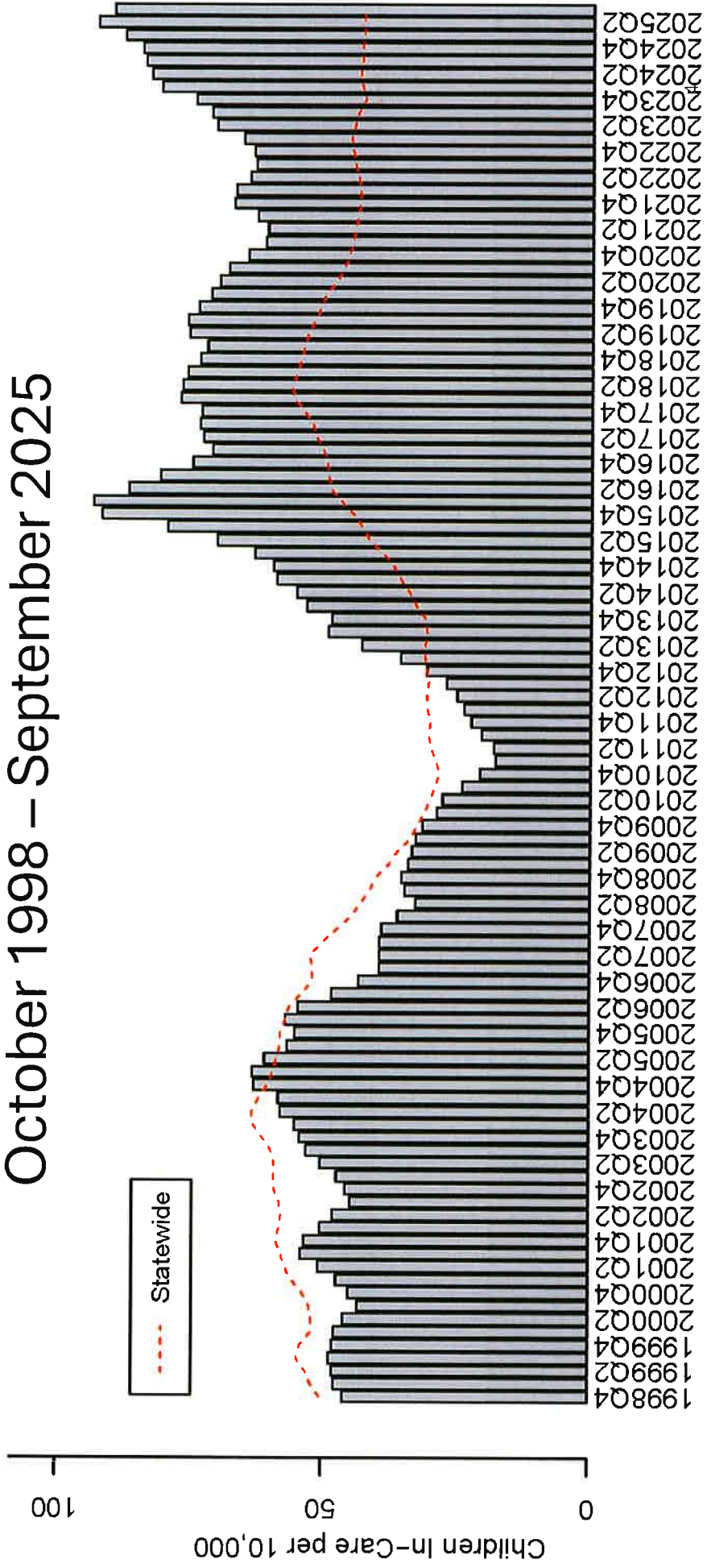


MONTHLY REMOVALS IN ACTUAL NUMBERS CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT October 2024 – September 2025

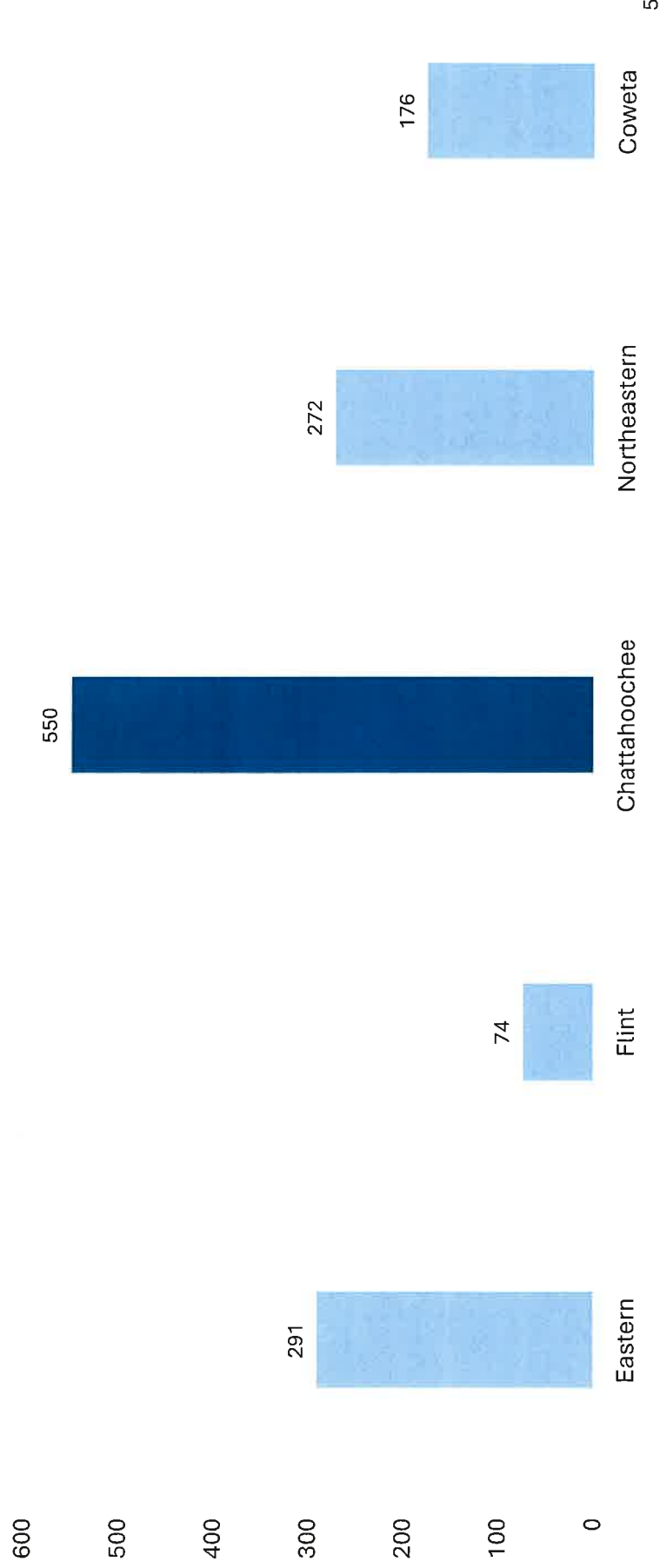


AVERAGE DAILY CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

October 1998 – September 2025

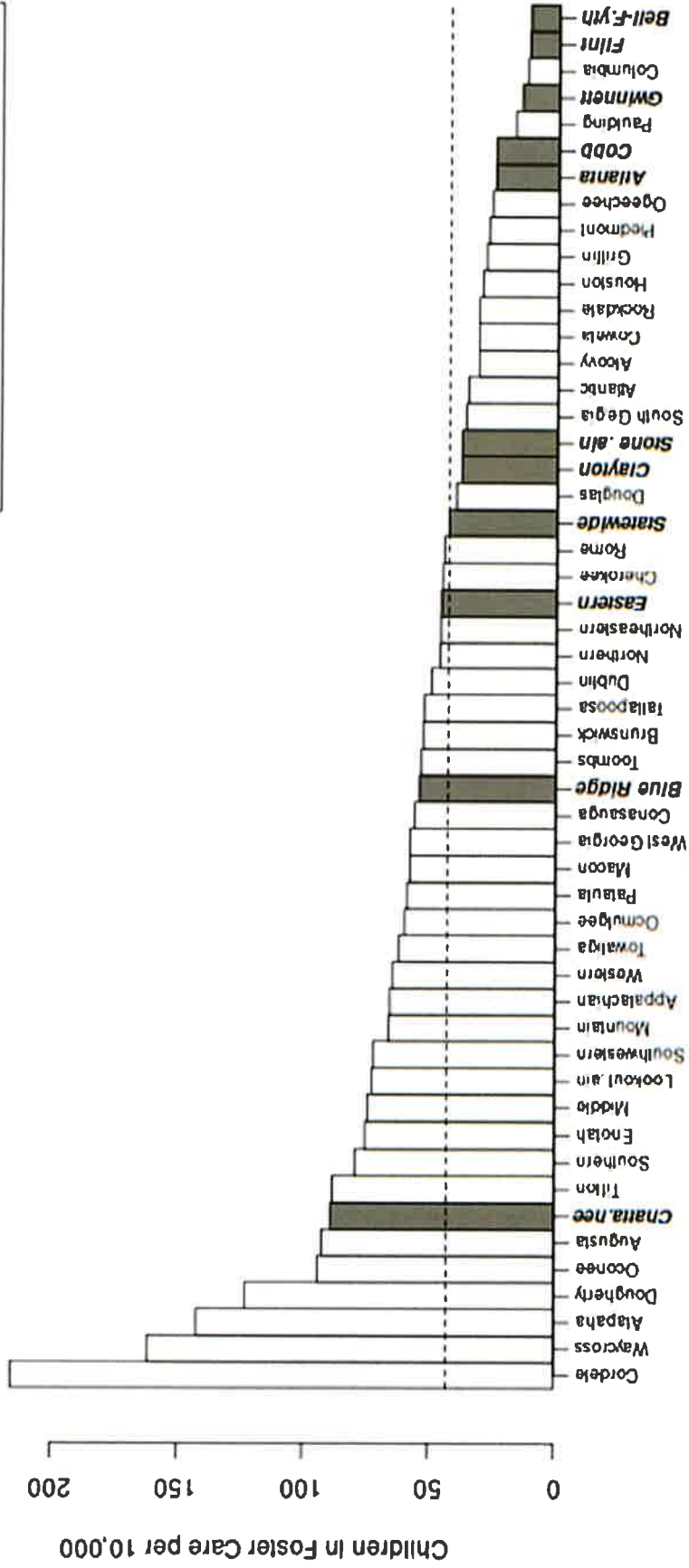


AVERAGE DAILY CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN ACTUAL NUMBERS October 2024 – September 2025



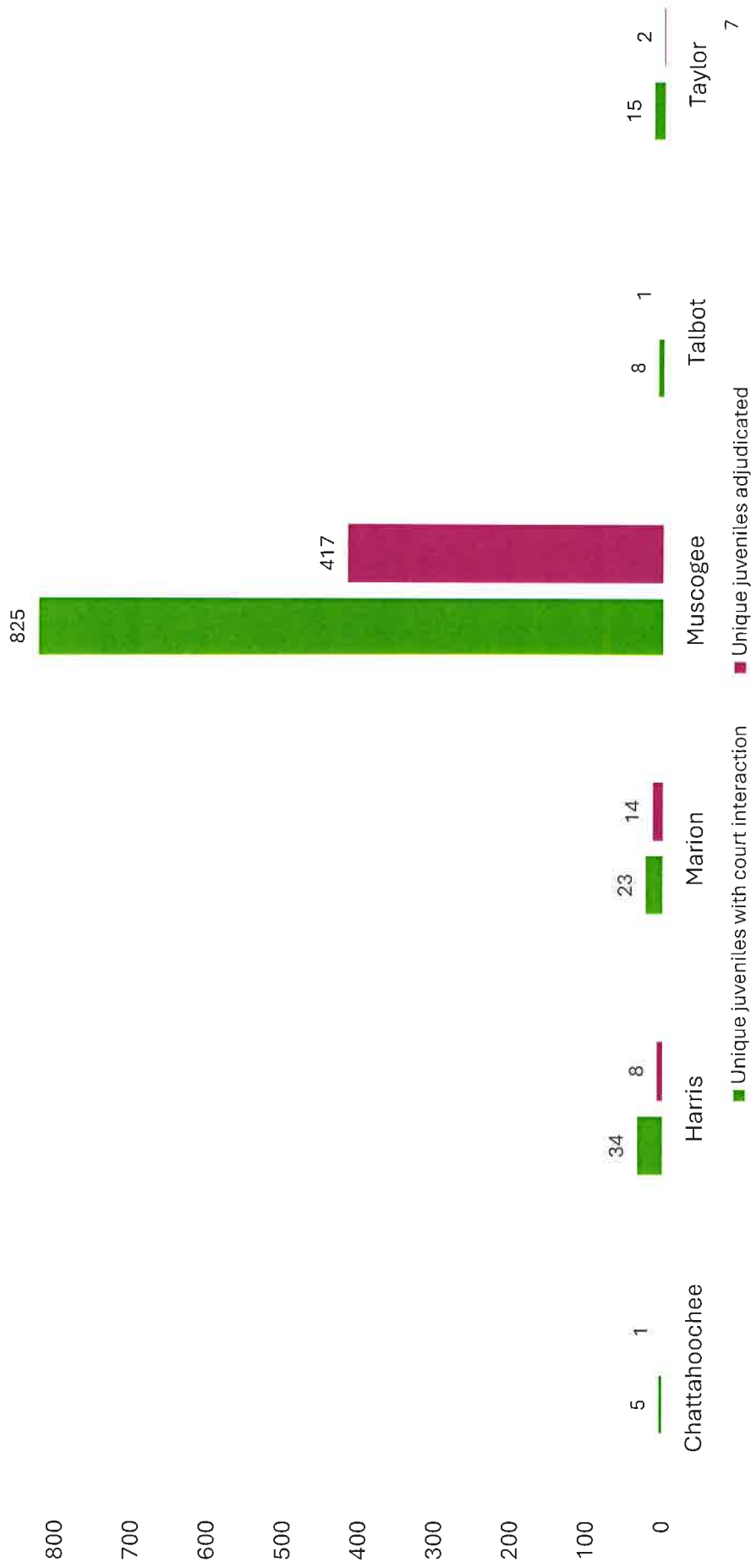
Circuit Rankings: Average Daily Children In Care per 10,000 in the Population During October 2024 through September 2025

--- Statewide Average=43.08
 ■ Regions with more than 60,000 children in the population.



CHATTAHOOCHEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

October 2024 – September 2025



Comparison of Delinquent Filings with Comparable Circuits

Muscogee

Savannah



Select Calendar Year: 2024 | Select Gender: All | Select Race: Muscogee | Select Judicial Circuit: All | Select Judicial District: All

At-Risk Population* 45,160

Referrals 1,359

Secure Detentions 275

Diversions 275

Secure Commitments 194

Delinquent Adjudications 1,314

Secure Confinements 13

Superior Court Transfers 0

Select Calendar Year: 2023 | Select Gender: All | Select Race: Oglethorpe | Select Judicial Circuit: All | Select Judicial District: All

At-Risk Population* 55,858

Referrals 918

Secure Detentions 265

Diversions 64

Secure Commitments 47

Delinquent Adjudications 531

Secure Confinements 4

Superior Court Transfers 4

Select Your Decision Point:

Petitions

Petitions Count

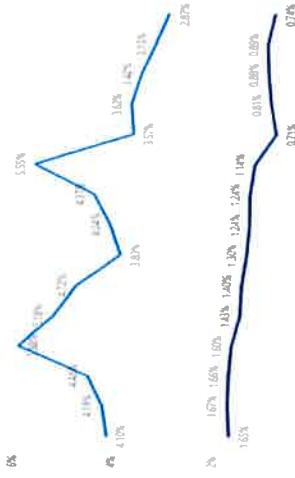
1,298

Petitions Percentage*

2.87%

Decision Point Trend*

At-Risk Percentage | Statewide Percentage



Select Your Decision Point:

Petitions

Petitions Count

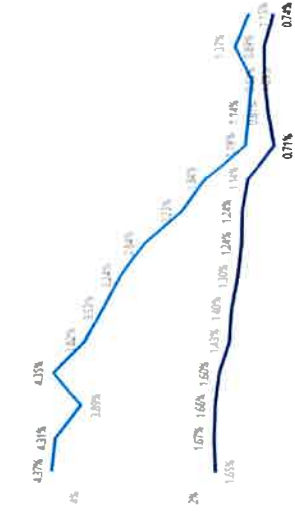
645

Petitions Percentage*

1.15%

Decision Point Trend*

At-Risk Percentage | Statewide Percentage



Comparison of Delinquent Filings with Comparable Circuits

Muscogee



Clayton

Select Calendar Year: 2021 | Select Gender: All | Select Race: All | Select County: Clayton | Select Judicial District: Superior Court Transfers

Select Calendar Year: 2021 | Select Gender: All | Select Race: All | Select County: Muscogee | Select Judicial District: Superior Court Transfers

Muscogee	Clayton
At-Risk Population*	At-Risk Population*
45,160	74,125
Referrals	Referrals
1,359	1,202
Secure Detentions	Secure Detentions
388	245
Diversions	Diversions
275	223
Petitions	Petitions
1,298	770
Delinquent Adjudications	Delinquent Adjudications
1,314	642
Secure Commitments	Secure Commitments
13	66
Superior Court Transfers	Superior Court Transfers
0	5

Select Year Decision Point:

Petitions

Petitions Count

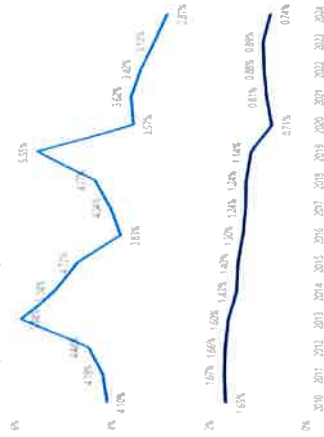
1,298

Petitions Percentage*

2.87%

Decision Point Trend*

At-Risk Percentage | Statewide Percentage



Select Year Decision Point:

Petitions

Petitions Count

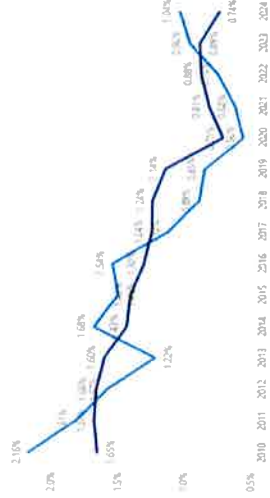
770

Petitions Percentage*

1.04%

Decision Point Trend*

At-Risk Percentage | Statewide Percentage



Comparison of Delinquent Filings with Comparable Circuits

Muscogee

Select Calendar Year: 2024 | Select County: Muscogee | Select Judicial Circuit: All | Select Judicial District: All

Select Gender: All | Select Race: All

At-Risk Population* 45,160

Referrals 1,359

Secure Detentions 388

Diversions 275

Delinquent Adjudications 1,314

Commitments 194

Secure Confinements 13

Superior Court Transfers 0

Bibb

Select Calendar Year: 2024 | Select County: Bibb | Select Judicial Circuit: M | Select Judicial District: All

Select Gender: All | Select Race: All

At-Risk Population* 33,923

Referrals 619

Secure Detentions 176

Diversions 145

Delinquent Adjudications 363

Commitments 59

Secure Confinements 15

Superior Court Transfers 0

