

Youth and Advocates Rally in Albany for Achieving Youth Justice 2020

*Raise the Age New York Campaign Joins Lawmakers to
Advance Critical Youth Justice Reforms*

Monday, January 27, 2020

1:00pm on the Million Dollar Staircase

(Albany, New York) – Today, over 100 young people and their allies arrived in Albany to announce a new campaign with Raise the Age NY for Achieving Youth Justice.

The 2020 Achieving Youth Justice Agenda includes: immediately ending all forms of solitary confinement for teenagers in Raise the Age Adolescent Offender facilities operated by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS); ending the criminalization of childhood by stopping the arrest and prosecution of children under 12 as juvenile delinquents; expanding youthful offender protections for court-involved youth up to age 25; and ending the adult incarceration of teenagers in DOCCS facilities.

We commend the Governor’s Proposed Budget legislation that would transfer all adolescents from DOCCS facilities to secure settings operated by the State’s Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) by October 2020.

Our Agenda includes reforms that will help achieve better outcomes for New York’s young people and genuine community safety for our communities, by embracing a broad vision for youth justice. Our vision reduces the impact of involvement with the justice system—from arrest to incarceration—bolsters youth well-being, reduces stress on families and communities, and provides young people with opportunities for educational and other resources to set them on a path away from crime.

“We’re not going to stop fighting or stop advocating for young people,” **said Mike Clark, youth advocate with Youth Represent.** “Because nobody should be deemed inferior because of things they’ve done before they’ve had a chance to become who they are.”

“The idea of arresting elementary school kids is wrong.” **said Khushayah Morris, a Beat the Odds youth scholar with Children’s Defense Fund-NY.** “It can make them feel trapped in a system that is made for them to never get out. We need to support kids in our communities, and build systems of restorative justice that help them learn from their mistakes.”

“I support the Youth Justice Agenda because it reflects our shared commitment to address the historical negative impacts that the criminal justice system has had on young people and their families, especially our Black and Latinx youth. No place is this more clear than the need to end

the arrest and prosecution of elementary school children under the age of 12.” **Velmanette Montgomery, New York State Senate**

Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee said “As chair of the committee on Children and Families, it is my priority to ensure that our most vulnerable children are protected. This is why we must reform our youth justice system to better serve children. When we stand with young people, we can continue to make the intent of Raise the Age a reality. I call on the Governor to direct the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to immediately prohibit the use of solitary confinement for teenagers, and pass legislation putting an end to the arrest of children as young as seven.”

“Raise the Age was a big first step for New York, but the reform left out the oldest and the youngest children who come into contact with our justice system. Today, we are here with young people to build on our success and help move New York into a national leadership position in youth justice.” **Naomi Post, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund-New York**

“Young people—especially youth of color who are disproportionately arrested—deserve justice and opportunities, not criminalization and barriers to success. New York’s youthful offender law is a powerful tool for ensuring that young people are not defined by a conviction for the rest of their lives; we must expand it so that more youth can benefit.” **Mike Pope, Executive Director, Youth Represent**

“New York has an opportunity to be a national leader and model in Youth Justice issues. We call on our State leaders to build on Raise the Age to expand protections for youth, end the criminalization of childhood and to end the use of solitary confinement - all of which are well-supported by research and evidence. We support and applaud the many Youth Advocates raising their voices to bring about these necessary reforms in New York State.” **Jennifer March, Executive Director, Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York**

“When the Raise the Age Campaign helped pass one of the most sweeping youth justice acts in New York history, many worried that youth justice issues wouldn’t be revisited for another decade. But widespread support for the Achieving Youth Justice agenda is proof that our work is only getting started.” **Paige Pierce, Chief Executive Officer, Families Together in New York State**

Media Contacts:

CONTACT: Julia Davis, jdavis@childrensdefense.org, (347) 907-2761

Kate Rubin, krubin@youthrepresent.org, (917) 647-5777

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