

# RAISEtheAGE | NY

## Coalition Statement

October 30, 2024. Two recent articles in *The New York Times* mischaracterize Raise the Age and require immediate correction from the statewide coalition. Both articles describe youth crime and violence as “surging,” whether in our communities or the City’s secure detention facilities. Both statements are false, as demonstrated by publicly available data and information about youth arrests and the conditions in facilities. Moreover, the pieces also misunderstand critical pieces of the Raise the Age law that we must address. Myths about youth and violent crime are harmful, whether in our communities or facilities. They threaten hard-won, common sense reforms like Raise the Age, which has made communities safer. And they distract us from the real solutions for reducing gun violence, like investments in marginalized communities across the City, where, as noted, young people struggle to access the resources they need to thrive. This is not just an issue for New York City, but a call for state leadership to support coordinated funding for community based organizations closest to children, youth and families. This includes the creation of a new Youth Justice Innovation Fund in the legislative session ahead.

[“Number of Young People Accused of Serious Crimes Surges in New York City”](#) advances dangerously inaccurate information about public safety and New York’s Raise the Age law. Contrary to the article, public data from the NYPD through 2023 shows that overall arrests among juveniles under 18 are down 47.7% over the last 7 years, and index crimes (serious crimes including murder, rape, robbery, and felony assault) are not “surging” – they have decreased by 3.6% over the same time period. The piece also misstates how Raise the Age works. All 16- and 17-year-olds charged with felonies have their cases heard first in the adult criminal court, and all cases where a youth is charged with using a gun or causing significant physical injury remain there – where adult sentencing applies. NYPD’s data also shows that of the 114 minors who were victims of gun violence in the City last year, the majority (two thirds) of those cases involved an adult with a gun – not a teenager.

[“Violence Surges in N.Y.C. Juvenile Jails After Influx of Older Teens”](#) relies on information from a City Department of Investigation report analyzing data from 2022 and 2023, when a more recent report from the Monitor overseeing the safety of young people in juvenile detention under the *Nunez* Consent Judgment provides a different picture. Contrary to the article, the Monitor’s report with data through June 30, 2024 describes significant decreases in youth-on-youth violence as well as youth-on-staff violence in the facilities. Data on both metrics show this kind of violence is on a steady trend downward – not surging up – and less

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than half of the rates seen in detention during 2021 and 2022. According to the monitor, “[u]ndergirding all of these strategies are improved relationships between staff and youth and among staff of all disciplines who appear to be functioning more holistically as a team. When interviewed, most youth remarked on the care and support they receive from Horizon staff, believing that staff had their best interest in mind.” All young people and staff should be safe in our juvenile detention facilities, and the evidence shows that the Administration for Children's Services is making progress. Suggesting that the answer is to move more young people back to Rikers Island is wrong, and we support the Administration’s efforts to keep as many youth remanded to detention out of what remains a dangerous adult jail facility that New York City is required by law to close by 2027. The key to safety remains reducing the number of youth in detention – something that youth justice stakeholders have been calling for over the last two years as the numbers of youth detained has increased. To do that, we will need the support of City leadership, judges, well-resourced alternative to detention programs capable of serving youth in communities, and a dedicated strategy to address the well-documented post-pandemic flood of guns into New York that comprises our collective safety.