

**For Immediate Release  
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**Experts Testify at D.C. Council Hearing on the Juvenile Justice Improvement Act of 2008,  
Which Removes Young People from D.C. Jail**

*Washington, D.C.* – Today, the D.C. City Council held a public hearing on the Juvenile Justice Improvement Amendment Act, which focuses on youth in the District who are charged with adult crimes and held in the D.C. Jail - a detention facility for adults. During the hearing, Councilmember Phil Mendelson, Chairperson of the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, and other members of the committee heard testimony from youth and local and national experts on Bill 17-913, the Juvenile Justice Improvement Amendment Act of 2008.

Bill 17-913 will create oversight in the process for adjudicating juveniles as adults by giving adult court judges the option to send youth to juvenile court and preserving Family Division jurisdiction over subsequent juvenile cases. The legislation will also end the pre-trial placement of youth in the D.C. Jail. This legislation was introduced on July 15, 2008 by Councilman Mendelson and Councilman Wells.

Only slightly more than half the youth held at the D.C. Jail and charged with adult crimes are actually convicted as adults. Yet, their experience in adult jail is likely to have long lasting negative consequences.

Youth involved in the adult criminal justice system are more likely to reoffend. Youth who have been previously prosecuted as adults are, on average, 34 percent more likely to commit additional crimes than youth retained in the juvenile justice system, according to a report released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Another report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the U.S. Department of Justice recently concluded that transferring youth to the adult criminal system substantially increases recidivism and recommended changing laws to decrease the number of youth transferred to the adult criminal justice system.

Publicly available data indicates that the vast majority of sixteen and seventeen year olds are charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office as adults, even if the youth has never been arrested before. "Too many of the District's youth are prosecuted as adults, said Liz Ryan, President and CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice. "We applaud Councilman Mendelson and Wells' efforts on finding ways to treat youth humanely and providing them the adequate services that they need."

Public opinion reinforces the proposed legislation and other research. A recent poll administered by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, surveyed D.C. voters and concluded that youth should not be thrown into adult jails for punishment.

- 77 percent believe youth who are arrested and awaiting trial should be placed in a juvenile facility, not in the DC jail, an adult facility.
- The public overwhelmingly believes that youth should be rehabilitated and not merely incarcerated.
- There is also strong consensus that rehabilitating youth helps prevent future crimes and will ultimately save taxpayer money in the long run.
- Voters believe the most effective ways to rehabilitate youth involve providing them with opportunities to better themselves – vocational training, high school degree assistance, and mental health treatment.

"D.C. Residents have spoken out and overwhelmingly agree that we should remove the District's youth from the D.C. Jail and provide more rehabilitation and education to these youth," added Ryan.

The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

**For more information, visit: [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org).**

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