



**For Immediate Release
March 11, 2008**

**Contact: Eric Solomon
Campaign for Youth Justice
(202) 558-3580 (office)
(202) 253-5557 (cell)**

Campaign for Youth Justice opposes Maryland gang bill S.B. 634: Criminal Law – Gang Activity – Jurisdiction over Juvenile Offenders

Proposed legislation makes it easier to transfer juveniles into adult criminal court

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Campaign for Youth Justice denounces proposed legislation in the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, S.B. 634: Criminal Law - Gang Activity - Jurisdiction over Juvenile Offenders. The Committee is holding a hearing today on this gang-related legislation.

The synopsis of the bill states, “excluding from the jurisdiction of juvenile court a child at least 16 years old who is alleged to have committed, as a member of a criminal gang, a specified act that would be a crime if committed by an adult; and providing for the application of the Act.”

“This legislation is a major step back for Maryland,” says Liz Ryan, Executive Director of the Campaign for Youth Justice. “Youth under the age of 18 should not be sent to adult courts and be exposed to danger.”

On average 7,500 kids are in an adult jail on any given day. Research shows that many of these kids spend time pre-trial in adult jails with adults and this is harmful to kids and to public safety.

According to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Task Force, in a November, 2007 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, youth who are prosecuted as adults are, on average, 34 percent more likely to commit crimes than youth retained in the juvenile justice system.

In recent polling data, commissioned by the MacArthur Foundation, the public strongly opposes placing kids in adult jails. The public solidly favored investing in effective approaches in the juvenile justice system.

Further, a number of national professional organizations, such as the American Bar Association (ABA), have issued national resolution callings for a change in state transfer laws, the opposite approach of S.B. 634. Other organizations include the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, American Correctional Association, National Association of Counties, National Juvenile Defender Center, National Juvenile Justice Network, National Parent Teacher Association, American Jail Association, and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

“We hope that the committee will reject proposals such as S.B. 634 or other legislation that would result in increased prosecutions of youth in the adult criminal court,” 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.