



For Immediate Release

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**Advocates Urge the Nevada Assembly to Pass AB 272
Provisions to Protect Kids in the Juvenile and Adult Justice System**

Las Vegas, Nevada – Today, more than two dozen advocates and family members from Las Vegas testified and offered public comments, via teleconference, in favor of Assembly Bill 272. The Nevada Assembly's Judiciary Committee discussed this bill at a hearing in Carson City. This legislation will require that youth (under 18) who are charged as adults be placed in juvenile detention facilities rather than adult jails. It will also raise the age at which youths may be tried as adults from 14 to 16 for some offenses. This legislation will reduce the dangers youth face when detained in adult jails and will also reduce the likelihood that youth will re-offend, by placing some youth in the juvenile justice system rather than in the adult criminal justice system.

In a recent report on State Trends by the Campaign for Youth Justice, Nevada was identified as one of 24 states that have begun to reform their treatment of juveniles. Esther Rodriguez-Brown, Founder of The Embracing Project, urged the Assembly in her testimony to invest in reform. "To create better communities we have to invest in our children. When they make mistakes, they should be disciplined, but they also must be treated and educated."

In addition to today's comments, more than a dozen attorneys, advocates, and experts signed on to a letter that was addressed to The Honorable William C. Horne, Chairman of the Committee on Judiciary at the Nevada Assembly. One signee was the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada (ACLU). "The ACLU is committed to advocating for our kids and families in Nevada," said Rebecca Gasca, the ACLU's Legislative and Policy Director. "The adult system is not the place to rehabilitate our youth. We must do what's right and pass AB 272."

Placing youth in adult jails or prisons puts them at risk of assault and abuse. According to the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Report, youth incarcerated in adult facilities are the group most at risk of sexual assault. Statistics compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics confirm that under-18 youths comprise a disproportionately high percentage of victims of prisoner-on-prisoner violence. Some facilities "protect" these at-risk youth by placing them in solitary confinement, in which they are frequently locked down 23 hours a day in small cells with no natural light. These conditions can cause anxiety, paranoia, and exacerbate existing mental disorders, putting youth at increased risk for suicide.

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[The Embracing Project](#) is a nonprofit community based organization, dedicated to improving the lives of inner city youth and their families by providing quality programming and self-enrichment opportunities.

The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) is the nation's guardian of liberty, and the [ACLU of Nevada](#) is an affiliate of the national organization, working to protect the rights and liberties of all Nevadans.