

## **RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE TRANSFER OF YOUTH TO THE ADULT CRIMINAL SYSTEM**

**WHEREAS** the historical role of the juvenile court system is to rehabilitate and treat youthful offenders while holding them accountable and maintaining public safety and is therefore better equipped to work with youth than the adult criminal justice system;

**WHEREAS** youth are developmentally different from adults and these differences have been documented by research on the adolescent brain and acknowledged by many state laws that prohibit youth under age 18 from taking on major adult responsibilities such as voting, jury duty, and military service;

**WHEREAS** an estimated 200,000 youth are tried, sentenced, or incarcerated as adults every year in the United States and most of the youth are prosecuted for non-violent offenses;

**WHEREAS** most laws allowing the prosecuting of youth as adults were enacted prior to research evidence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention demonstrating that youth prosecuted in adult court are, on average, 34 percent more likely to commit crimes than youth retained in the juvenile system;

**WHEREAS** youth of color receive more punitive treatment than white youth for the same offenses at all stages in the justice system and the point of greatest disparities is often the decision to transfer a youth to the adult system;

**WHEREAS** the use of statutes or procedures that automatically exclude youth from the juvenile court without an assessment of individual circumstances by an impartial judge denies youth basic fairness;

**WHEREAS** it is harmful to public safety and to young offenders to confine youth in adult jails or prisons where they are significantly more likely to be sexually assaulted, physically assaulted, and upon release, more likely to re-offend than youth housed in juvenile facilities; **WHEREAS** youth detained or incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system should be housed in juvenile facilities which have been successful at rehabilitating youth;

**WHEREAS** most incarcerated youth show symptoms of mental health problems, studies show juveniles in adult facilities may manifest some of the most substantial mental health treatment needs among all juveniles involved in the justice system;

**WHEREAS** youth sentenced as adults receive an adult criminal record which is a barrier to further education or employment and the collateral consequences normally applied in the adult justice system should not automatically apply to youth arrested for crimes before the age of 18;

**WHEREAS** youth may receive extremely long mandatory minimum sentences and deserve an opportunity to demonstrate their potential to grow and change;

**WHEREAS** the monetary value of saving a high-risk youth from a life of crime is estimated to range between \$2.6 and \$4.4 million for each child<sup>i</sup> and moving youth from the adult criminal justice system to the juvenile justice system is cost-effective;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that \_\_\_\_\_ supports the reform of laws, policies, and practices that will reduce the number of youth sent to adult criminal court, remove young offenders from adult jails and prisons, ensure youth sentences account for their developmental differences from adults, and enable youth to return to their families and society without compromising community safety.

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<sup>i</sup>Mark Cohen paper: <http://www.youthbuild.org/atf/cf/%7B22B5F680-2AF9-4ED2-B948-40C4B32E6198%7D/Generic%20Report%20on%20Monetary%20Savings%20-%20Final.pdf>

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**National Organization Supporters as of 4/26/2010**

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Friends Service Committee

American Jail Association

American Probation and Parole Association

American Youth Policy Forum

Center for Children's Law and Policy

Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators

CURE LIFE-LONG

Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches

International Community Corrections Association

Justice Policy Institute

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Mental Health America

Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center

National Advocacy Center for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National African American Drug Policy Coalition

National Alliance of Faith and Justice

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Social Workers

National Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Children

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Center for Youth Law

National Collaboration for Youth

National Congress of American Indians

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

National Juvenile Defender Center

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National Juvenile Justice Network  
National Network for Youth  
National Partnership for Juvenile Services  
National Youth Advocate Program  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
New England Juvenile Defender Center  
Presbyterian Church USA  
School Social Work Association of America  
Southern Juvenile Defender Center  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Southwest Key Programs  
The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
The Sentencing Project  
United Methodist Church, Board of Church and Society  
Women of Reform Judaism  
Youth Homes, Inc.

**State Organization Supporters as of 4/26/2010**

**Alabama**

Alabama CURE  
Alabama Youth Justice Coalition  
VOICES for Alabama's Children  
Juvenile Justice Policy Group

**Arizona**

Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest  
Children's Action Alliance  
Episcopal Diocese of Arizona  
Maricopa County Juvenile Public Defender Office  
Our Family Services

**Arkansas**

Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind  
Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

**California**

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Books Not Bars

Office of Restorative Justice, Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Redwood Community Action Agency

Larkin Street Youth Services

**Colorado**

Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition

Colorado CURE

Pendulum Foundation

**Connecticut**

Center for Children's Advocacy

Collaborative Center for Justice

Connecticut Voices for Children

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance

Connecticut Parent Teachers' Association

Connecticut Association for Community Action

Middlesex Coalition for Children

National Association of Social Workers-Connecticut

**District of Columbia**

Covenant House

Sasha Bruce Youthwork

**Florida**

Florida CURE

Diocese of St. Augustine Justice and Peace Commission

Pax Christi Florida

Urban Resource Strategists, Inc.

Florida Youth Initiative

**Illinois**

Black Network In Children's Emotional Health

Child Care Association of Illinois

Griffin Center - East St. Louis

Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative

YWCA Quincy

**Iowa**

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Iowa Coalition 4 Juvenile Justice

**Kentucky**

Central Juvenile Defender Center

**Louisiana**

Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children

Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana

Capital Post Conviction Project

**Maine**

Child Protection & Juvenile Section of the Maine State Bar

Juvenile Justice Clinic, University of Maine School of Law

Maine Children's Alliance

**Maryland**

Community Law in Action

Public Justice Center

**Massachusetts**

New Vision Organization, Inc.

**Michigan**

Association for Children's Mental Health

Michigan Collaborative for Juvenile Justice Reform

Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency

Michigan Federation for Children and Families

**Minnesota**

Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies

Integrated Community Solutions

Elim Transitional Housing, Inc.

Children's Law Center of Minnesota

**Mississippi**

Mississippi Youth Justice Project

**Nebraska**

Voices for Children in Nebraska

**Nevada**

National Association of Social Workers, Nevada Chapter

**New Jersey**

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Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey

New Jersey Parents Caucus

**New Mexico**

Community Action New Mexico

New Mexico Conference of Churches

New Mexico Council on Crime and Delinquency

**New York**

Ladies of Charity of Chemung County

Church Women United of Chemung County

Church Women United of NYS

Court St Joseph #139 Catholic Daughters of the Americas

Past Regents Club Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Diocese of Rochester

Chemung County Council of Women

Chemung County Council of Churches

Veteran Grange #1108

Pomona Grange #1

FIERCE NYC

Correctional Association of New York

**North Carolina**

Juvenile Justice Clinic of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law

Action for Children North Carolina

**Ohio**

Children's Defense Fund – Ohio

Juvenile Justice Coalition (of Ohio)

The Office of the Public Defender – Ohio

Voices for Ohio's Children

**Oregon**

Juvenile Rights Project

Partnership for Safety and Justice

**Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

**Virginia**

Virginia Coalition for Juvenile Justice

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**Washington**

Citizens for Responsible Justice

**West Virginia**

Daymark

**Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families