



BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

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**Parents and Youth Speak Out on the Importance of Removing
Children from Adult Jails and Prisons to Keep Our Kids Safe
*Congressional Briefing Sheds Light on Prison Rape Elimination Act Proposals***

Washington, D.C. – As the U.S. Department of Justice is considering final regulations to implement the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), the Campaign for Youth Justice and the National Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJJPC) held a Congressional briefing on the importance of removing children from adult jails and prisons. The event featured a panel of experts, who have been directly impacted, who discussed why it is crucial for the U.S. Department of Justice to adopt a complete ban on placing youth in adult jails and prisons.

Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act in 2003 to stop sexual violence behind bars, and one of its main concerns was the risk youth face when housed in adult jails and prisons. The U.S. Department of Justice recently released the preliminary regulations for public comment in 2011. Unfortunately, the proposed rules do not protect youth in adult facilities. In response to the call for public comment, thousands of individuals, groups in every state across the country, national organizations, and professional associations of every type are urging the Attorney General to protect youth in the justice system by banning the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons, and requesting that Congress exercise its oversight responsibilities to ensure the Attorney General protects our young people.

“Prison rape and assault are on my mind every night and day when I am thinking of my incarcerated son,” said Illinois Parent Grace Warren, whose son has been prosecuted as an adult. “I call on the U.S. Department of Justice to implement these PREA standards without delay and ensure children are not at risk in adult facilities.”

On any given night in America, 10,000 children are held in adult jails and prisons. Approximately 7,500 of these kids have never been convicted of a crime.

Many children are placed in isolation which can produce harmful consequences, including death. Youth in adult facilities 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 risk of suicide. In fact, youth housed in adult jails are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than are youth housed in juvenile detention facilities.

“There is no way to keep youth safe in adult facilities,” said Michael Lawson of Nevada, who was tried as adult at the age of 16 and spent 3 years in adult facilities. “If we are looking to rehabilitate youth and make the community safer, then we need to remove all children from adult jails and prisons.”

States have started to take action to remove youth from adult facilities. Recognizing the many dangers youth face when incarcerated with adults, four states (Maine, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Oregon) recently changed their laws to keep youth in juvenile facilities.

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*The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) 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 background on this issue, please visit www.campaignforyouthjustice.org.*