



Juvenile Justice Reform Bill Advances in Harrisburg, Advancing YSRP's Priorities



Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project

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In a major step forward for youth justice reform, the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee voted to advance HB 1381 today, which the Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project (YSRP) hopes will usher in a more humane era of support and care for youth involved in the criminal legal system.

YSRP is always committed to advocating for the rights and well-being of our young client-partners, whether in the courtroom or in Harrisburg. [House Bill 1381](#) takes a decisive step in addressing our primary policy concern head-on: the elimination of “direct file,” which automatically treats certain children as adults in the eyes of the law.

House Bill 1381 includes several significant improvements to the juvenile justice system:

- **Treating all children as children:** All charges would originate in juvenile court, with transfer to adult court possible after a hearing.
- **Expanding Diversion:** Lower-level charges would require diversion, ensuring a more appropriate response to minor behavior.

- **Limiting School Referral:** Reducing unnecessary referrals to juvenile court from schools.
- **Raising the Minimum Age:** Most cases require a minimum age for juvenile court jurisdiction from 10 to 13.
- **Narrowing Detention:** Limiting detention for youth under 14, among others.
- **Eliminating Fines and Fees:** Most juvenile fines and fees would be abolished, while restitution would be limited.
- **Capping Probation Length:** A cap on the length of juvenile probation so that young people do not languish under supervision for years.
- **Juvenile-Specific Miranda Rights:** Ensuring young people know their rights from the outset.
- **Ending Solitary Confinement:** Eliminating solitary confinement in juvenile facilities, with some exceptions.
- **Raising the Age of Transfer:** Increasing the age of transfer from juvenile to adult court from 14 to 16.

Voices of Experience

YSRP's advocacy efforts have been fueled by the heartfelt and compelling stories of those directly impacted by incarceration and adult prosecution as children. Our Speakers Bureau has played a pivotal role in sharing these experiences with policymakers across Pennsylvania. It's a testament to the power of firsthand stories in changing hearts and minds, as several lawmakers have told us that these stories were instrumental in their support for the bill.

Progress, But a Long Road Ahead

The bill's success in the House Judiciary Committee is a major step in a long legislative journey. As we look ahead, we will continue our advocacy as

the bill progresses to the full House of Representatives and then the Pennsylvania State Senate. Our commitment remains unwavering: advocating for our current and future client-partners until the law aligns with our firm belief that children are capable of transformation and deserving of support and care.



Written by Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project