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ACLU-CT & CTJA: The solution to youth offenders is not more time

HARTFORD, CT (07.08.21) – Concerning the discussion of bringing Connecticut’s legislature back into session to debate the state’s juvenile court system, the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) and the Connecticut Justice Alliance (CTJA) issue the following joint statement.

“Have we not learned anything from the ‘tough on crime’ era of the 1980s and 1990s? Have we not realized repeating the mistakes of the past does not help our future. Instead of implementing more harmful policies which seek to extend the amount of time a young person spends incarcerated for a crime, we must address the root causes of these issues: poverty and biased over policing.

We have seen that upping the time of incarceration does not deter offenders from reoffending. Constructing ways to send more youth offenders to jail for longer terms is not the solution we seek or need in Connecticut. For years, we have run this test and know that increased policing of our children - especially those that are Black, brown, or part of the LGBTQ community - worsens the issues. Investing in families and communities is where we need to begin.

As a solution, we should be talking to the people that live in our communities and are the most affected by these laws. Changes to the juvenile laws proposed by legislators must be subject to the full legislative process and not pushed through during a special session without public input.

For the past decade, crime, including car theft, is on a steady decline in Connecticut. We all agree there is an issue to be solved, but we don’t agree on the solution. Our system is broken, and increased incarceration is not how we fix it.

Harsher penalties don’t work. Policing and incarceration don’t make us safer. Investing in children and their families’ chance at opportunity and security does. The investments that make our communities healthy and strong prevent crime.”

This statement can be found on the ACLU-CT website [here](#) and CTJA website [here](#).

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ABOUT THE THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF CONNECTICUT

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, non-profit membership organization that defends, promotes, and preserves individual rights and liberties under the U.S. and Connecticut constitutions in state and federal court, the General Assembly, and the state's 169 towns and cities.

ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT JUSTICE ALLIANCE

The Connecticut Justice Alliance (CTJA) is a youth/adult partnership working to end the criminalization of youth. The Alliance works to disrupt and dismantle the pathways that funnel children and youth into the juvenile justice system by using organizing, advocacy, and policy tools to protect the rights, futures, and well-being of potentially, currently, and formerly incarcerated youth, while also ensuring youth who are detained, incarcerated, and involved in the courts and legal systems receive safe, fair, and dignified treatment.

CTJA was formerly known as the [Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance](#).