

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Kenneth Londono, 646.335.0433, [Kenneth.Londono@berlinrosen.com](mailto:Kenneth.Londono@berlinrosen.com)

## **Raise the Age Campaign Responds to Raise the Age Budget Language**

*Despite Executive Action, New York Remains One of Two States to Automatically Prosecute 16 and 17-Year-Olds As Adults, Despite Risks to Youth and Public Safety*

**Albany, NY** - In response to the Raise the Age legislation in Governor Cuomo's budget and its inclusion in his State of the State priorities, a coalition of law enforcement experts, unions, clergy and children's advocates expressed hope that the final budget would include legislation to protect public safety and ensure youth are treated in an age-appropriate manner. New York remains one of only two states in the country where 16 year-olds are automatically charged as adults, which has been shown to increase the chance of re-offending and reduce public safety.

"The Governor's proposed legislation to raise the age is an important step toward a smart on crime policy that protects our youth and communities," **said Samantha Levine, Acting Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund - NY**. "We look forward to working with the Legislature as they come to an agreement that allows New York to join 48 other states in charging youth in an age-appropriate manner which has been proven to reduce recidivism and improve public safety."

"We look forward to Raise the Age legislation being included in the final budget," **said Jennifer March, Executive Director of the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**. "District Attorneys, Sheriffs and children's advocates all agree - New York can't keep charging youth in the one-size-fits-all adult criminal justice system. The current system increases recidivism and reduces the chance for youth to turn their lives around. We can and must do better for our youth and our communities."

"As a longtime family advocate, I've heard too many heart breaking stories of youth suffering needlessly when they find themselves thrust into the corrections system with disastrous and sometimes deadly results. We cannot lose one more child to a system that contradicts what we know about adolescent brain development, increases recidivism, and makes our community less safe," **said Paige Pierce, CEO of Families Together in New York State**. "Including 'Raise the Age' in the budget recognizes that enough is enough, it is time for New York State to live up to its progressive reputation and be smart on crime."

"We are encouraged by Governor Cuomo including Raise the Age legislation again in his budget. Hopefully this session the Legislature will get it right and apply a comprehensive approach to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18, trusting the brain science research to give our youth a second chance and improve public safety," **said Cora Greenberg, Executive Director of the Westchester Children's Association**.

"Here on Long Island we have seen support from a widespread, diverse group of individuals including the Suffolk County sheriff, judges, county legislators and community members. We urge the inclusion of Raise the Age legislation in this year's budget, as we work with justice involved Long Island youth we know that being smart of crime can both save taxpayer dollars and keep kids out of the adult criminal justice system," **said Serena Liguori, Co-Executive Director, Herstory Writers Workshop, Inc.**

**The Raise the Age NY campaign is calling for a comprehensive Raise the Age policy that:**

- Raises the overall age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18, which is consistent with other states.
- Ensures no youth who is 16 or 17 years old is placed in an adult jail or prison.
- Amends the law to ensure parental notification upon the arrest of a 16 or 17 year old and ensure 16 and 17 year olds are interviewed using practices employed for youth, including parental involvement prior to waiving Miranda rights.
- Better addresses the collateral consequences of court involvement and help youth become successful adults by sealing records and expanding YO status to age 21 and to additional non-violent crimes.
- Increases investments in the front-end diversion services that keep youth in their communities rather than incarceration. These alternative to detention, placement and incarceration services are less expensive and more effective at reducing recidivism.
- Originates as many cases of 16 and 17 year olds in Family court as possible; create Youth Parts in adult court for remaining cases, and apply the Family Court Act to as many as possible, regardless of which courthouse in which the case is heard.
- Raises the lower age of juvenile delinquency from age 7 to age 12 (except for homicide offenses, which should be raised to 10).

**About the Raise the Age NY campaign:**

Raise the Age NY is a public awareness campaign that includes national and local advocates, youth, parents, law enforcement and legal representative groups, faith leaders, and unions that have come together to increase public awareness of the need to implement a comprehensive approach to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York State so that the legal process responds to all children as children and provides services and placement options that better meet the rehabilitative needs of all children and youth.

New York is one of only two states in the country (the other is North Carolina) that have failed to recognize what research and science have confirmed – adolescents are children, and prosecuting and placing them in the adult criminal justice system doesn't work for them and doesn't work for public safety.

Children who are prosecuted as adults are more likely to continue committing crimes in the future. Children who are treated as children are more likely to stay out of jail, and out of the justice system:

- Studies have found that young people prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system are **34% more likely to be re-arrested for violent or other crime than youth retained in the youth justice system.**
- A study comparing youth prosecuted in New York's adult courts to young people prosecuted for the same felonies in New Jersey's juvenile courts found that the New York youth were more likely to recidivate. Not only were New York youth **100% more likely to be rearrested for a violent crime**, they also had **higher re-incarceration rates** and **shorter time periods to re-arrest** than their New Jersey peers.
- In 2013, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission found that when the state began prosecuting 17-year-olds as juveniles, juvenile crime continued to decline. Moreover, between 2010 when the law changed, until 2013, the state experienced a 14% decrease in violent crime. Contrary to what opponents had predicted, including 17-year-olds did not overload the juvenile justice system, nor did it increase juvenile offenses.
- Research into brain development underscores that adolescents are in fact children and that the human brain is not fully formed until the age of 25:
- As the cognitive skills of adolescents are developing, adolescents' behavior is often impulsive and they lack the ability to focus on the consequences of their behavior.
- Because the adolescent brain is still developing, the character, personality traits and behavior of adolescents are highly receptive to change; adolescents respond well to interventions, learn to make responsible choices, and are likely to grow out of negative or delinquent behavior.

Raise the Age NY is a campaign that supports raising the age of criminal responsibility for all children in New York to improve outcomes for children and public safety.

For more information about the Raise the Age campaign, visit [www.raisetheagency.com](http://www.raisetheagency.com).

***Lead group members:***

*Center for Community Alternatives  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York  
Correctional Association of New York  
Families Together in New York State  
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies  
Herstory Writers Workshop, Inc.  
NAACP  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy  
The Children's Agenda  
The Children's Defense Fund – New York  
The Fund for Modern Courts  
Westchester Children's Association  
Youth Represent*

***Additional supporters to date:***

*1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East  
32BJ SEIU  
Alternatives for Battered Women  
American Friends Service Committee (NY)  
Amnesty International  
Arab American Association of NY  
Association for Community Living, Inc.  
Association of NYS Youth Bureaus  
Association to Benefit Children  
Harry Belafonte  
Bronx Christian Fellowship Church  
Bronx Clergy Roundtable  
Brooklyn Community Services  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
Campaign to End the New Jim Crow  
Casa Rochester/Monroe County, Inc.  
Center for Children's Initiatives  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Child Welfare Organizing Project  
Children's Village  
Citizens Action of New York  
City of Glen Cove Youth Bureau  
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families  
Coalition for Education Justice  
Coalition for Hispanic Children and Families  
Coalition for the Homeless  
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists  
Commission on the Public's Health System  
Communities United for Police Reform  
Community Connections for Youth  
Community Service Society  
Community Voices for Youth and Families  
Crossway Church  
Dignity in Schools Campaign – New York  
Equal Justice Initiative  
Faith in New York  
Families On The Move of NYC, Inc.  
First Corinthian Baptist Church  
Forestdale Inc.  
Good Shepherd Services  
Graham Windham  
Harlem Children's Zone  
Human Services Council  
Jewish Child Care Association  
Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club  
Latino Justice PRLDEF  
Lawyers for Children  
Leake & Watts Services, Inc.  
Legal Action Center  
Legal Aid Society  
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House  
Long Island Progressive Coalition*

*Lutheran Family Health Centers*  
*Make the Road New York*  
*Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.*  
*Montefiore School Health Program*  
*National Association of Social Workers - New York State*  
*National Economic and Social Rights Initiative*  
*Neighborhood Family Services Coalition*  
*New York American Academy of Pediatrics, District II*  
*New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc.*  
*New York Center for Juvenile Justice*  
*New York Civil Liberties Union*  
*New York Lawyers for the Public Interest*  
*New York Society for Ethical Culture*  
*New York State Coalition for Children's Mental Health*  
*New York State Coalition for School-Based Health Centers*  
*New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare*  
*New York Theological Seminary*  
*NYC Jails Action Coalition*  
*Partnership for After School Education (PASE)*  
*Partnership for the Public Good*  
*Partners in Restorative Initiatives*  
*Pumphouse Projects*  
*Save the Kids*  
*SCO Family of Services*  
*Staten Island Council on Child Abuse and Neglect*  
*S.T.R.O.N.G. Youth Inc.*  
*Teachers Unite*  
*The Black Institute*  
*The Brotherhood/Sister Sol*  
*The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES)*  
*The Children's Aid Society*  
*The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, Inc.*  
*The Fortune Society*  
*The Legal Aid Society*  
*The New York Foundling*  
*The Osborne Association*  
*The Partnership For Public Good*  
*The Resolution Plan*  
*Tremont United Methodist Church*  
*United Neighborhood Houses*  
*Unique People Services*  
*Uniting Disabled Individuals, Inc*  
*Urban Health Plan, Inc.*  
*Urban Justice Center*  
*Urban Youth Collaborative*  
*VOCAL-NY*  
*Women's City Club of New York*  
*Pastor Mike Walrond*  
*William F. Ryan Community Health Network*  
*YOUTH POWER!*

###

