



## NEW YORK STATE COALITION FOR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



### **Youth Justice Facility Closure and Community Reinvestment**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Governor's FY2022 budget as it pertains to juvenile justice. The Executive Budget includes a proposal to close four State-operated juvenile placement facilities and reduce New York's overall investment in youth incarceration. It is the proposed reduction in juvenile justice spending that the NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health will comment. Rather we support the creation of a Juvenile Justice Community Reinvestment plan to keep the resources in they system that responds to juvenile justice system needs.

Institutional settings can pose significant risk to young people's well-being and have been shown to neither reduce future contact with the system nor promote community safety. Moreover, juvenile placement facilities are the site for extreme racial disproportionality. During 2019, almost 75% of children admitted to Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) custody were Black or Latinx, while they represent only 40% of New York's children.

Closing facilities is a crucial step for youth justice reform and racial equity in New York. But in the words of Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, "While we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us." We need to step into the space where there is action, not just discussion, about the community and family-based supports that will permanently address the systemic racism that results in so many youth interactions with the carceral system.

The savings associated with closing these four youth facilities – estimated at over \$21 million in operational and \$14 million in capital costs – should be reinvested in communities, including those that are driving use of state placements for children.

Models for community reimbursement developed by advocates in our State's mental health system provide a valuable template for how we can systematically redirect funds from expensive residential settings to community-based services and local resources for children and families whenever there is a facility closure. New York's spending on residential placements in juvenile justice exceed \$800,000 annually per child. Imagine how those dollars could be better spent on youth who have contact with the criminal legal system. Community stakeholders including impacted youth and families, service providers, child welfare and mental health system administrators, attorneys, judges and probation, should drive local solutions supported with these funds.

Community reinvestment is not only a more effective response for youth but also it is an important tool for promoting racial equity in the youth justice system.

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