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Hearing on Public Protection
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Citizens' Committee for Children of New York is a 76-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, nor represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through research and advocacy. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, as well as Chairs Bailey, Dinowitz, Hoylman-Sigal, Lavine, Salazar, and Dilan and all members of Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means, Senate and Assembly Codes, Judiciary, Crime Victims, Crime and Correction committees for holding today's hearing on Public Protection in the FY24 Executive Budget.

In face of the rhetoric that has dominated many recent news articles on crime in New York, we believe it is essential to make clear that youth crime is not rising in New York State or New York City.¹ Youth arrests and index crimes have continued to decline over the past ten years. Furthermore, young people are much more likely to be a victim of a gun crime than a perpetrator of a gun crime. The fear mongering around crime that is currently permeating many media outlets is destructive, dangerous, and untrue.

Any incident of violence is unacceptable, and we strongly support efforts to reduce violence in communities and support victims of violence. But the path to true safety and wellbeing is not through criminalization but is instead through investments in youth and communities. Young people in New York have clearly expressed that they need and want access to housing, behavioral health care, afterschool programs, year-round employment opportunities and holistic supports – not further criminalization.²

CCC's recently released index on Child and Family Well-being, analyzing all 62 counties in New York, which demonstrates just how critical it is that we take action to address the challenges that New York's youth and families are experiencing in counties throughout the state.¹

Out of 62 counties in New York State --

¹ <https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/cfwbny2023/>



- In 22 counties, more than 20% of children live in households below the poverty level, which is higher than the national rate of 16%.
- In 49 counties, more than 20% of renter households spend at least half of their income on rent.
- In 29 counties, less than 50% of 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in early education programs.
- In 25 counties, more than 10% of youth 20 to 24 are jobless yet actively seeking work.

These are severe structural issues causing instability for many youth and their families. We are clearly in a time where we need robust actions to lift incomes, stabilize housing, connect families to child care, and address rising behavioral needs. Public protection means public investment, it is essential that we fund services that will support the rebuilding of our state and put families and youth first.

CCC recommends the following to ensure youth are supported and communities are safe:

- Reject entirely Executive Budget proposals that revisit the components of Bail reform.
- Go further than the Executive Budget by including the following in one house budget bills and the final enacted budget:
 - Expedite the distribution of Raise the Age funds to counties, prioritize reaching local CBOs, to fully implement the law and provide services for justice involved youth and ensure NYC can access the RTA funds.
 - Reauthorize and invest state funding in the Close to Home juvenile justice initiative.
 - Establish and fund a statewide Housing Access Voucher Program, and guarantee the HAVP reaches often neglected populations, such as homeless youth, youth aging out of foster care, leaving detention or placement, as well as undocumented young people.
 - Prioritize reaching these special populations of youth with year-round employment training opportunities as well as the Summer Youth Employment Program and youth development programs.
 - Pass Solutions Not Suspensions Act (S1040), to end the reliance on suspensions as the default way to discipline students and establish a framework to instead use proven restorative approaches to inappropriate behavior and discipline.²
 - Invest in behavioral health care for children and adolescents, increasing rates of reimbursement for services and prioritizing the building and retaining of a sorely needed workforce, to make prevention and clinical services accessible and affordable for all young people.
 - Lift the minimum wage and then index it to inflation. We support the passage of bills S3062 Ramos/A7503 Joyner to secure wage increases for almost 2.9 million

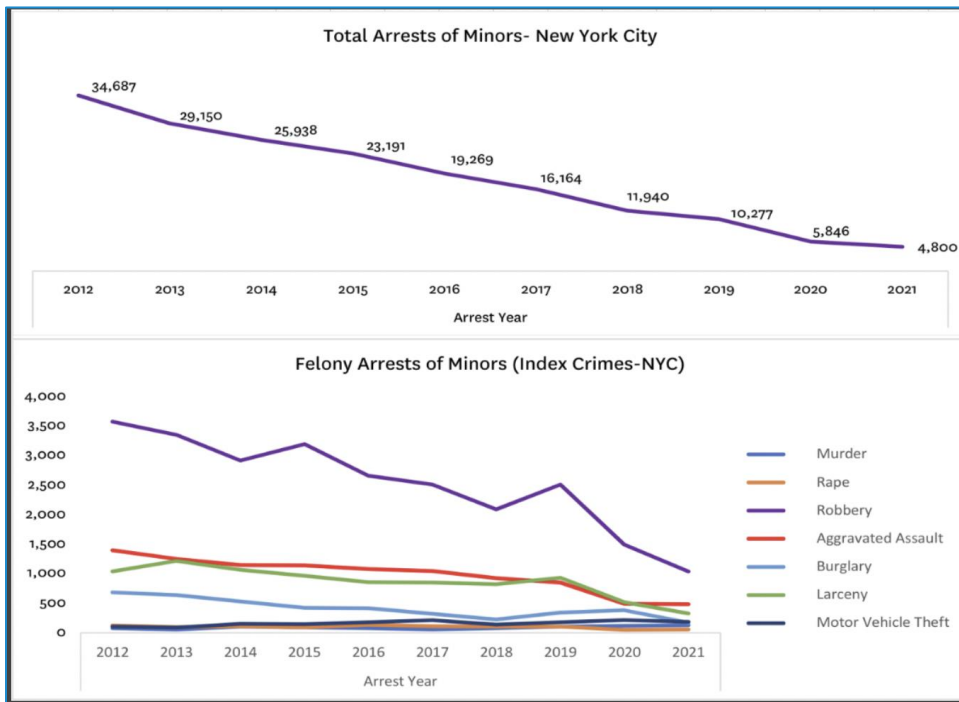
² <https://www.solutionsnotsuspensionsny.org/>



- workers throughout the state; and A2244 Gonzalez Rojas/S808 Biaggi to eliminate the sub-minimum wage.
- Increase investments in community-driven, youth informed violence interrupting initiatives as well as alternatives to detention and incarceration that focus on reaching youth.

The above recommendations will help create safe communities and help youth and their families throughout the state thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.





**Citizens' Committee
for Children** of NEW YORK

