

Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Submitted to the New York State Fiscal Year 2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
Public Protection
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Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure the wellbeing of New York's children, families, and communities.

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 FY25 Executive Budget.

In the 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 nor New York City. Youth arrests and index crimes have continued to decline over the past ten years.¹ The fear mongering around crime that is currently permeating many media outlets is destructive, dangerous, and untrue. At a time when New Yorkers are working to rebuild after the pandemic, facing the subsequent economic insecurity, and a current behavioral health crisis, we need investments in youth and communities. While other areas of the budget must address actions and investments that lift incomes, stabilize housing, and meet rising behavioral needs, public protection also requires public investment. It is essential that we fund a full continuum of youth justice services to rebuild our state and put youth and communities first.

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

- **Expedite** counties' access to the already appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars for the Raise the Age law's implementation.
- **Allow** local community-based organizations to directly apply for State RTA implementation funds rather than going through their counties. Local service providers are closest to young people and their families and are often in the best position to develop the continuum of programs necessary under RTA.
- **Ensure** New York City can access the RTA funding. NYC represents about half of the youth in the state, but statutory language excludes the city from receiving state support. Every county and all New York youth should benefit from state funding under RTA, no matter where they live.
- **Increase** the state's Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP) appropriation by supporting the proposed increase of \$3 million included in the Governor's Executive Budget.

¹ In New York State (data does not include NYC) saw a decline of 73% in total arrests, and a decline of 68% in Index Crimes for young people under the age of 18. In NYC alone, there was a decline of 77% in total arrests, and a decline of 48% in Index Crimes. Data from DCJS Juvenile Arrests (Non-NYC) 2013-2022; Analysis of NYPD data by CCC for 2013-2022.

- **Pass** the Youth Justice and Opportunity Act (A.4238/ S.3426): This legislation adds protections for youth up to the age of 26 and creates a new status to classify this age group under. This will allow youth to have their records sealed and enable them to access more supportive services.
- **Pass** the Youth Interrogation Bill (A1963/S1099): This legislation will ensure that young people under 18 have their legal guardians notified prior to being questioned by the police.
- **Pass** Solutions Not Suspensions (A.5691): This legislation will improve the school climate and limit the number of days a student can be suspended to a maximum of 20 days.

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.