

Press Release

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Judges, Youth Corrections Experts, and Advocates Thank Governor Kasich, General Assembly Leaders for Passage of Historic Juvenile Justice Reforms

Columbus, OH (June 29, 2011) –

Today, the State of Ohio became safer, smarter and saved money for taxpayers after Governor John Kasich signed H.B. 86 and joined House and Senate leaders in supporting juvenile justice reform package. A consortium of judges, youth corrections experts, and advocates for youth supported H.B. 86, and celebrated the bill signing as a significant step forward for youths and all of Ohio.

The passage of HB 86 is a major improvement for youths in our system, and for our State itself,” said the Honorable Theresa Dellick, Mahoning County Juvenile Court Judge. “These reforms will mitigate placing kids on a conveyor belt to adult crime. Moreover, the reforms will provide better services and outcomes at a decreased cost. The changes in HB 86 do not solve all juvenile justice system issues but they will aid in providing better outcomes for children, reduced crime and lower taxpayer costs. That’s a win for everyone in Ohio.”

Judges, youth corrections experts, youth advocates and supporters of sound juvenile justice policies congratulated Governor John Kasich, Department of Youth Services Director Harvey Reed, House Speaker William Batchelder, Senate President Tom Niehaus, Senator Tim Grendell, and Representative Louis Blessing for their leadership and courage.

The reforms included in HB 86 include:

- **Research-informed practices.** Specifically, it adds new language that states: “Research-supported, outcome-based programs and services, to the extent available, shall be encouraged;”
- **Extends juvenile court authority to allow for judicial release throughout a youth’s term of commitment.** Under this reform, judges maintain jurisdiction to consider early release opportunities throughout a youth’s commitment, including juvenile’s serving mandatory sentences;
- **Revises mandatory sentencing for youth.** Revises four existing mandatory sentencing specifications to allow for judicial discretion in instances where the youth was not the main actor;
- **Adopts uniform competency standards.** The bill adopts a uniform juvenile competency code that applies to all delinquency proceedings using a juvenile-specific standard;

- **Allows young people to return back to the juvenile court.** The legislation creates a reverse waiver provision for youth automatically transferred to adult court (mandatory bindover) that would permit transfer back to juvenile court;
- **Strategies to address young people's mental health needs.** The legislation creates an Interagency Mental Health Juvenile Justice Task Force to address the challenges of delinquent youth who "suffer from serious mentally illness or emotional and behavioral disorders." The six month Task Force has representation from the state Supreme Court, the Governor's office, the House, the Senate, ODYS, ODMH, juvenile judges, public defenders, prosecutors, academic institutions and numerous other experts, such as NAMI. It must submit a report with findings and recommendations to the legislature by March 31, 2012.