

1975 • 2025

Juvenile Law Center

Celebrating 50 Years Leading the Fight for Children's Rights

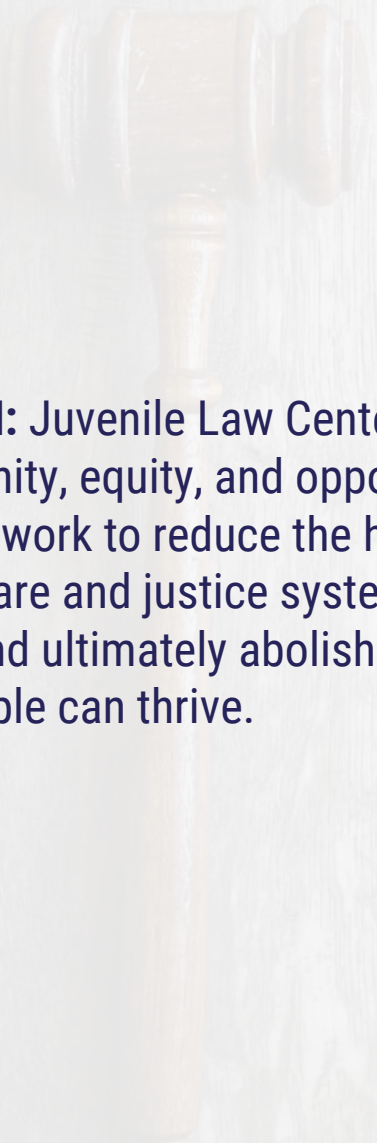
50 years



CASE FOR SUPPORT

PLEASE JOIN US as we celebrate half a century as America's first nonprofit public interest law firm for children and one of the most influential voices for children's rights nationwide. We seek your investment in our mission and vision, and in our ongoing fight for children's rights.

For 50 years, we have worked toward a world in which all kids can thrive. Help us continue the fight!



OUR MISSION: Juvenile Law Center fights for rights, dignity, equity, and opportunity for youth. We work to reduce the harm of the child welfare and justice systems, limit their reach, and ultimately abolish them so all young people can thrive.

OUR VISION: An anti-racist world that treats children like children and allows them to thrive in their families and communities.



JUVENILE LAW CENTER

1975 - 2025

Founded in 1975 by four Temple Law School graduates, Juvenile Law Center was the first nonprofit public interest law firm for children in the country. Initially, we offered direct legal representation to children in the child welfare, justice, education, or mental health systems.

We pioneered multi-disciplinary representation to support all areas of our clients' lives – family, community, education, mental health, and the law.

Over time, we realized our victories would be limited unless we tackled systemic failures.

Our work evolved, and our reach grew from Philadelphia to across Pennsylvania to advocating for youth nationwide.

*Pictured from top to bottom - Judith Chomsky, Marsha Levick,
Philip Margolis, & Robert Schwartz*

WE WERE AMONG THE FIRST IN THE COUNTRY TO:

- Link **adolescent development** to youth's culpability and competency.
- Spearhead amicus efforts to **embed emerging developmental and neuroscientific research** into U.S. Supreme Court case law on youth sentencing, strip searches of school students, and police interrogation of youth.
- Establish a Youth Advocacy Program for system-involved youth to work **alongside** legal advocates.
- Tackle "zero tolerance" policies in **schools and the school to prison pipeline**.
- Highlight and address the needs of **older youth** exiting foster care.
- Advocate nationally for the **elimination of fees and fines** imposed on youth and families addressing how these financial burdens push youth deeper into the system and families deeper into poverty.
- Overturn a state law **requiring children** to register as sex offenders for life.

In 2000, **Barry and Jan Zubrow** donated \$1 million dollars to Juvenile Law Center to create the first fellowship in children's law in the United States, the **Sol and Helen Zubrow Fellowship in Children's Law**.

This fellowship, now in its **25th year**, has enabled Juvenile Law Center to fulfill its commitment to build the field of children's advocates across the country.

Today, we are a national leader in the fight for youth rights.

We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics and human dignity.

We use multiple approaches to fight for young people as we work to keep youth out of the juvenile and criminal legal systems and family regulation system (also called the child welfare system): legal advocacy, policy advocacy, youth advocacy, and strategic communications.

Our strategies are interconnected. We pair **impact litigation with policy advocacy, scholarship, and community outreach** to push for lasting and transformative change.

Our policy agenda is **informed by—and often conducted in collaboration with**—youth, family members, and grassroots partners. In all our work, we seek out strategic communication opportunities to enhance the work and to shape public opinion.

“The first lawyers I met were Bob Schwartz and Marsha Levick and what they showed me was that lawyers could be smart and hard-working and tactical and strategic and dedicated.

But, more than that, they showed me that lawyers can be kind, lawyers can be compassionate, lawyers can make a difference in the lives of the people around them.”

**- Bryan Stevenson,
Executive Director, Equal
Justice Initiative**

Key Successes

Landmark Court Decisions

As states funneled children, especially Black and Brown children, into the juvenile and criminal legal systems, we played a pivotal role in advocating before the U.S. Supreme Court for the law to recognize children's unique developmental traits and reduced culpability. We led amicus efforts on behalf of dozens of advocacy organizations and co-counseled cases urging the U.S. Supreme Court to protect young people from extreme sentencing policies and abusive interrogation practices, and to ensure that both youth and adults are safe from harmful and discriminatory fines. We also advocated for similar outcomes at the state level, resulting in **98 wins before state supreme courts** across the country.

Spotlight U.S. Supreme Court Wins:

- ***Roper v. Simmons*** (2005), abolishing the death penalty for youth.
- ***Safford v. Redding*** (2009), finding the strip search of a student in school without individualized suspicion of contraband violated the fourth amendment.
- ***Graham v. Florida*** (2010), banning juvenile life without parole sentences in non-homicide cases.
- ***J.D.B. v. North Carolina*** (2011), finding age relevant when determining when youth are entitled to a Miranda warning from police.
- ***Miller v. Alabama*** (2012), ending mandatory juvenile life without parole sentences for youth in homicide cases.
- ***Montgomery v. Louisiana*** (2015), applying Miller retroactively, and granting relief to approximately 2,000 individuals across the country serving life sentences for acts committed as children.
- ***Timbs v. Indiana*** (2019), clarifying that states – like the federal government – may not impose excessive fines on individuals (youth or adult).
- ***Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.*** (2021), finding that schools could not discipline a student for off-campus speech that does not cause substantial educational disruption.

Spotlight State Supreme Court Wins:

- ***In the Matter of L.M.*** (Kansas, 2007), finding children in juvenile court have a right to a jury trial.
- ***Commonwealth v. J.B.*** (Pennsylvania, 2010), holding that the courts could not require a confession to find a child amenable to treatment in juvenile court.
- ***Bellevue School District v. E.S.*** (Washington, 2011), finding that a child had a right to counsel at a truancy hearing.
- ***In re J.C.N.-V.*** (Oregon, 2015), rejecting a simplistic interpretation of “sophistication and maturity” that allowed youth to be transferred to adult court as long as they could appreciate the wrongfulness and impact of their actions.
- ***Commonwealth v. Evelyn*** (Massachusetts, 2020), holding that a child suspect’s age and race matter when determining whether they have faced an illegal seizure under the Fourth Amendment.
- ***People v. Parks*** (Michigan, 2022), holding that mandatory life without parole for an 18-year-old violates the state Constitution.
- ***Tennessee v. Booker*** (Tennessee, 2022), holding that a mandatory life sentence of 51 years imposed on a youth violates the Eighth Amendment.
- ***Commonwealth v. Mattis*** (Massachusetts, 2024), holding that imposing life without parole on emerging adults who were 18, 19, or 20 at the time of their offense violates the Massachusetts Constitution.

“After having spent nearly thirty years in prison, I remember first being in shock, then overcome by an incredible sense of relief as I re-read the ticker on CNN. My mind was not quite ready to believe what my ears had just heard - ‘The United States Supreme Court has declared the imposition of a mandatory life sentence upon a child less than 18 years of age violates the ban against cruel and unusual punishment.’ As the gravity of the decision began to sink in, I heard and saw several incarcerated persons - juvenile lifers and others - in a state of utter jubilation. I couldn’t restrain the tears from streaming down my cheeks as I allowed myself to consider the implications: the possibility that my now illegal sentence would be reversed.”

- **ABD’ALLAH LATEEF** Juvenile Law Center Board Member; Deputy Director,
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

Impact Litigation Victories

We file civil lawsuits as well as juvenile and criminal court appeals to protect children from harm. In recent years we have **successfully challenged overcrowding, solitary confinement, and other abusive conditions in youth prisons; ensured youth have due process rights when returning to school from placement; ensured kinship care providers receive the same benefits from the state as foster parents; kept youth off harmful sex offender registries; and ensured children have a meaningful right to counsel.**

We also have an active amicus practice of 50 cases per year across the country and are the go-to organization for lawyers representing children.

Spotlight Cases:

J.J. v. Litscher

In 2018, we successfully settled a case in which we challenged horrifying conditions of confinement facing almost 200 young people in two Wisconsin youth prisons; we continue to work to implement the agreement. Young people incarcerated there were placed in solitary confinement, shackled to tables, regularly strip searched, and pepper sprayed even when already locked in their cells. The settlement prohibits these harmful practices; legislation passed in the wake of the lawsuit will close the facilities. This is also a victory for racial justice as the population of almost entirely Black youth from Milwaukee faced lockup over 200 miles from home.

Kids for Cash

In a case widely covered by national and international press, we fought for thousands of children in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania who were unconstitutionally committed to a juvenile detention center. A corrupt judge who sent them to lockup was later convicted, along with the President Judge of the county, of federal crimes, including the illegal receipt of millions of dollars from the for-profit juvenile detention center to which he sent youth.

Our federal lawsuit **secured over \$20 million in compensation** for young people (as well as their parents) whose rights had been violated; our state court litigation **cleared the records of these children**, and our subsequent policy advocacy resulted in new protections for all Pennsylvania children, including a strengthened right to counsel in juvenile court.

Our Kids for Cash litigation was possible because of a courageous teenage whistleblower, Hillary Transue, who spoke out after the judge ordered her to be locked up for posting a satirical MySpace page. **In September 2024, we welcomed Hillary to our Board of Directors.**



“Joining Juvenile Law Center’s board is an emotional experience. It is a testament to the power of advocacy and compassion and what those things can do for a child, the aspirations that can be instilled, and the kind of loyalty that can be built. It is truly my full-circle moment where I get to become one of the good guys.”

- HILLARY TRANSUE Juvenile Law Center Board Member; Adjunct Professor of English, Widener University

Shaping Policy in Collaboration with Youth and Families

Juvenile Law Center consistently produces scholarship to lay the groundwork for thoughtful and informed advocacy – over the last several decades Juvenile Law Center staff have published more than 150 articles in law school journals and other professional publications, sponsored four law review symposia, and participated as experts in countless local, state, and national conferences.

We testify and serve as experts across the country to support policies that protect children from harmful and discriminatory system involvement, support educational stability for young people in the family regulation system, safeguard youth confidentiality, and protect youth from unfair and harmful fees and fines. Our scholarly articles and advocacy reports have shaped national and state policy campaigns on these issues.

We work side by side with young people who have experienced system involvement, relying on their insights and expertise in setting our policy agenda. Our advocacy is enhanced by our youth advocates' testimony before legislative bodies, their presentations to thousands of stakeholders each year, and their reports and publications. This work is supported by thoughtful strategic communications that reinforce our advocacy and help influence positive stories about youth.

Spotlight Policy Reforms:

Debt Free Justice: Across the country, young people and their families are forced to pay fees and fines into the juvenile legal and family regulation systems – and then the financial burdens drive youth deeper into the system and their families into poverty. After drafting a groundbreaking report called *Debtor's Prison for Kids* exposing the problem, **we launched a national campaign to end the practice** with organizations across the country.

The impact has been transformative for youth and families. With partners, and in collaboration with youth and family leaders across the country, ***between 2016 and today, we passed legislation in over 20 states, resulting in over \$700,000 of court debt discharged, almost \$30 million that families no longer need to pay each year, and almost 200,000 families impacted each year.***

Educational Stability and Success: Young people who are placed in foster care or juvenile correctional facilities are often pushed out of their schools, making it impossible to reengage in school and leading to exceptionally high drop-out rates.

After decades of work in partnership with youth advocates and state and national partners, Juvenile Law Center secured legislative victories including the federal **Fostering Connections Act**, the federal **Every Student Succeeds Act**, and **Pennsylvania Act 1**. **We are particularly proud of our youth leaders who fought hard for these changes** by publishing and disseminating a report and meeting with and testifying before lawmakers.

“Jessica Feierman and her team at Juvenile Law Center are responsible for exposing the national crisis of fines and fees in the juvenile justice system and have led successful efforts to eliminate the fines and fees that are harming children and their families in states across the country. Their work has ensured that children aren’t punished and further entrenched in the criminal justice system simply because of the financial circumstances of their families.”

- JOANNA WEISS, Co-Executive Director, Fines and Fees Justice Center

Our 2025 – 2026 Strategic Priorities

Join us in fighting to keep youth at home, in their communities, and safe from harm by supporting our work on our current strategic priorities:

Keeping Youth Out of the Family Regulation and Juvenile and Criminal Legal Systems: We challenge policing and surveillance of youth and families and the ongoing entanglement of youth within the family regulation (foster care) and juvenile legal systems. We fight the criminalization of youth and the harms of the family regulation system. We confront bias and discrimination that pushes Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ youth as well as youth with disabilities into these systems. We support community-based and restorative approaches.

Keeping Youth Out of the Adult Criminal Legal System: We challenge laws that permit the transfer of youth to the adult system, particularly the disproportionate impact of transfer laws on Black and Brown youth. We also challenge lengthy sentences to move young people more quickly from incarceration back home and work to ensure a meaningful right to parole for youth convicted in the adult system.

When children thrive, communities thrive.

Keeping Youth in their Homes and Communities: We seek to prevent placement for youth. We challenge harmful and abusive conditions of confinement as leverage to close harmful facilities and reduce incarceration, and to confront the inequities in the juvenile and criminal legal systems and in the family regulation system.

Reducing Harm: Our work addresses a wide array of practices in the juvenile and criminal legal systems and family regulations system that cause harm and exacerbate inequities: the imposition of fees, fines, and other financial penalties; abusive conditions of confinement for youth in placement; and extended surveillance of youth through retention and disclosure of juvenile and criminal records, sex offender registration, and community notification requirements.

Together, we can stand up for rights, dignity, equity, and opportunity for youth nationwide.

Our goal is to raise \$2,000,000 over the next two fiscal years

Investing in Juvenile Law Center

With an annual budget of \$4.5 million, Juvenile Law Center employs a staff of 22, including 13 attorneys, 1 paralegal, 2 social workers, and 6 communications, development, and operations team members. We also employ a team of youth advocacy fellows and advocates – young people who share expertise based on their own lived experience in the juvenile, criminal, and family regulation systems to help shape our reform agenda.

Juvenile Law Center has prudently managed its resources. Over the past 50 years, we have built a reserve fund that is now approximately \$5 million. Our expenditures closely track our revenues.

Our assets are distributed between unrestricted, temporarily, and permanently restricted dollars. We are a lean organization – we have no debt and few property or equipment expenses.

Juvenile Law Center has been the recipient of several large one-time awards from foundations. These include the \$500,000 MacArthur Genius Award for Creative and Effective Institutions (2008), and a one-time, \$1 million award from the William Penn Foundation (2010).

to support our ongoing fight on behalf of young people.

60% of Juvenile Law Center's budget comes from foundations. Juvenile Law Center has been supported by leading foundations in the United States, including:

Andrus Family Funds
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arnold Ventures
Ballmer Group
Ford Foundation
Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
Heinz Endowments
Independence Foundation
MacArthur Foundation
Philadelphia Bar Foundation
Philadelphia Foundation
Pittsburgh Foundation
Public Welfare Foundation
Roots & Wings Foundation
Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies
W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation
Stoneleigh Foundation
Tow Foundation
van Ameringen Foundation
William Penn Foundation

In the last ten years we have significantly grown revenue from individuals; **currently, individual donations comprise nearly 30% of our budget.**

Our goal over the next two years is to more than double our individual gifts revenue to guard against any diminution of foundation dollars and financially sustain our organization through a leadership transition and into the future.

Create a Legacy

Unrestricted contributions not only maintain Juvenile Law Center's core strengths, but also ensure that we have the necessary infrastructure to keep pace with changing times and shape the future of children's rights in this country.

In our 50th year, Juvenile Law Center will undergo a leadership transition to make room for the next generation of leaders at this extraordinary organization. Sue Mangold will step down as Chief Executive Officer after nearly ten years and Marsha Levick will step down as Chief Legal Officer after decades of leadership at the organization she co-founded. This is an exciting time for Juvenile Law Center as new leaders will have the opportunity to build on the incredibly sturdy foundation of the organization's first 50 years.

This work could never have been possible without Bob Schwartz, who co-founded Juvenile Law Center in 1975. Bob retired in 2015 after leading the organization to 40 years, and recently passed away in October 2024; it is difficult to overstate his legacy—not just amongst family and friends (of whom he had so many)—but within the field of child advocacy as a whole. It has been a healing balm to hear so many of our colleagues and supporters speak about their love for him and how his passion for the work inspired them to support the work of Juvenile Law Center. It can feel especially tough to move forward in the face of loss, but Bob always reminded us to move “onward” toward the future. We invite you to invest in our future.

Significant annual gifts and multi-year pledges will help to support Juvenile Law Center's work.

Our 50th anniversary year gives us the opportunity to look back on our effectiveness, successes, and achievements, but the fight is far from over. With your partnership, we will continue to work toward fulfilling our vision so that all children can thrive.

We urge you now to consider supporting us to reach our goals in one of the following ways:

50th ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN INITIATIVES	GOAL TO REACH
FOUNDERS LEGACY FUND in honor of Marsha Levick & Bob Schwartz	\$500,000
LEADERSHIP FUND in honor of Sue Mangold	\$300,000
FOUNDATION Discretionary 50th Anniversary grants	\$250,000
50th ANNIVERSARY GALA Sponsorship / <i>Champions for Children's Rights</i> Business Circle	\$800,000
FALL CAMPAIGN ANNUAL FUND	\$350,000
JONATHAN W. CUNEO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS LITIGATION FUND	\$300,000
TOTAL	\$2,500,000

We invite you to invest in our shared future.

FOUNDERS' LEGACY FUND: Help us raise up to \$500,000 to honor Co-founders Chief Legal Officer Marsha Levick and Executive Director Emeritus Bob Schwartz by sustaining the fight for children's rights into the future.

Marsha and Bob not only changed the field of children's rights through a lifetime of work on behalf of youth but also committed themselves to building the field through leadership and mentorship – establishing Juvenile Law Center as one of the most influential advocacy organizations for children in the country and inspiring thousands of children's rights advocates working nationwide today.

LEADERSHIP FUND: Help us raise up to \$300,000 to honor CEO Sue Mangold and build a pool of new unrestricted funds which will provide organizational flexibility while supporting our ongoing work to protect the rights of youth impacted by the child welfare and justice systems.

FOUNDATIONS: Help us raise up to \$250,000 in one-time discretionary grants outside of yearly grants in recognition of our 50th Anniversary and 2025 – 2026 Strategic Priorities.

50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA SPONSORSHIP: Help us raise up to \$500,000 in sponsorships for our May 2, 2025 Anniversary Gala and join us to celebrate 50 years of leading the fight for children’s rights and to honor our Chief Legal Officer and co-founder, Marsha Levick. Marsha has dedicated her career to advancing and safeguarding the rights of youth and has worked tirelessly to change the face of youth rights and justice across the country.

As a **CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS Business Partner** we ask for a two-year \$5,000 or \$10,000 gift to support our fight for economic justice and second chances for youth in the legal system. Your gift will also include promotion and a table (10 seats) for our Anniversary Gala on May 2.

FALL CAMPAIGN ANNUAL FUND: Help us raise up to \$350,000 by December 31st 2024 with a gift to our annual fund.

JONATHAN W. CUNEO CHILDREN’S RIGHTS LITIGATION FUND: to support litigation and policy efforts of Juvenile Law Center in its continuing fight for reform and transformation of the family regulation and juvenile legal systems in the United States.

With your help, Juvenile Law Center will continue to lead the fight for children's rights in the future.

To contribute to Juvenile Law Center or discuss other ways to support our work, please contact our Director of Development, Rosie McNamara-Jones at (215) 625-0551 x118 or rmcnamara-jones@jlc.org.

Thank you for your consideration of a significant gift to support our efforts to transform the juvenile and criminal legal and family regulation systems for children.

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**Celebrating 50 Years Leading
the Fight for Children's Rights**

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