

CONTACT:

KATY OTTO (JUVENILE LAW CENTER)

OFFICE: 215-625-0551 x 128 EMAIL: kotto@jlc.org

With Senate Passage of First Step Act, Youth Solitary Confinement in Federal Detention One Step Closer to Being Abolished

Juvenile Law Center applauds the inclusion of language to end this harmful practice at the federal level and urges states to follow suit

Philadelphia, PA (December 18, 2018): With the passage of the First Step Act, the Senate just voted to abolish the use of solitary confinement for youth in federal facilities. Juvenile Law Center has long fought to stop solitary confinement of youth, and applauds the move.

“Youth placed in solitary confinement face devastating consequences including depression, sleeplessness, psychosis, and hallucinations,” said Sue Mangold, CEO of Juvenile Law Center. “Youth solitary confinement can lead to self-harm and even suicide. This reform package takes the important step of prohibiting the use of solitary confinement for youth in the federal justice system. We applaud Sen. Booker for his tireless efforts to include this provision. The developing adolescent brain is especially harmed by solitary confinement. Every state should follow this federal lead to ban the use of solitary confinement of youth.”

The bill, passed by a 87-12 margin today by the U.S. Senate, adopted language from The Mercy Act, a bill to end youth solitary confinement in federal facilities championed over the past few years by Senators Booker (D-NJ), Paul (R-KY), and Lankford (R-OK), among others. The bill heads next to the House, where Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) has indicated he intends to move it forward quickly, and then on to President Trump’s desk.

Juvenile Law Center hopes that states will follow suit and end the practice of placing young people in solitary. The organization [published a report last year on the harmful effects of youth solitary](#). Additionally, in June 2018, a class action civil rights lawsuit brought by Juvenile Law Center, the ACLU of Wisconsin, and Quarles & Brady against the state for its use of solitary confinement and other harmful practices [resulted in a settlement and change in policy](#). For more on Juvenile Law Center’s fight to end youth solitary confinement, please [visit our website](#).

Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity and opportunity for youth in the foster care and justice systems. Founded in 1975, Juvenile Law Center is the first non-profit, public interest law firm for children in the country. We fight for youth through litigation, appellate advocacy and submission of amicus (friend-of-the-court) briefs, policy reform, public education, training, consulting, and strategic communications. Widely published and internationally recognized as leaders in the field, Juvenile Law Center has substantially shaped the development of law and policy on behalf of youth. We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are rooted in

research, consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics, and reflective of international human rights values. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.JLC.org.

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