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## **Juvenile Justice Advocates Applaud the Introduction of the Justice for Juveniles Act**

**Washington, D.C. (November 12, 2019)** – The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) and Juvenile Law Center (JLC) applaud Representatives Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Kelly Armstrong (R-ND), Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), John Katko (R-NY), and Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) for introducing [the Justice for Juveniles Act](#).

The legislation will protect young people from abuse in institutions by exempting them from the strict filing requirements of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA). The PLRA currently creates obstacles for young people seeking relief in federal court who face abuse in juvenile and adult correctional facilities, by requiring incarcerated youth to file grievances before bringing a lawsuit, sometimes with the very people who have abused them. It limits the type of relief youth can get from the courts and prevents youth from bringing a lawsuit for emotional injuries if they are unable to also prove physical injuries. It also limits attorneys' fees, making it harder for young people to find attorneys to represent them.

“Across the country, young people who are incarcerated far too often face physical abuse, sexual abuse, solitary confinement, pepper spray, and restraints,” said Jessica Feierman, Senior Managing Director of Juvenile Law Center. “They need the legal system to keep them safe. This bill is a huge step forward, as it will provide youth greater access to the courts when they are abused or mistreated in facilities.”

The Justice for Juveniles Act, which exempts youth from the requirements of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, will help protect young people like Hid, a youth from Pennsylvania, who was held by one detention staff member while being punched by another. He never told anyone at the facility, writing in the [Broken Bridges](#) report (written by Juveniles for Justice, a youth advocacy program at Juvenile Law Center) that “the staff who punched [him] would bribe [him] and other youth with snacks to not tell the CFO...they told [him] not to tell when [he] went to court.” Additionally, Hid was held in solitary and rarely checked on except at mealtime.

The Justice for Juveniles Act will also protect youth incarcerated in adult jails and prisons. “Youth held in adult jails and prisons are highly vulnerable to abuse and are five times more likely to be sexually abused than youth held in juvenile detention facilities,” said Rachel Marshall, Federal Policy Counsel with the Campaign for Youth Justice. “Youth also lack the maturity to fully understand, pursue, or exhaust the complex administrative rules and procedures in correctional facilities. We hope to see robust co-sponsorship of the Justice for Juveniles Act and we thank Representatives Scanlon, Armstrong, Jeffries, Katko, and Reschenthaler for introducing this important legislation.”

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*For more information about Juvenile Law Center’s work, visit [www.JLC.org](http://www.JLC.org) and for more information on the Campaign for Youth Justice’s work, visit [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org).*