



## YOUTH JUSTICE INNOVATION FUND

**A8491 (HEVESI) /S643 (CLEARE)**

The Youth Justice Innovation Fund would direct \$50 million to **community-based organizations to provide a continuum of services** from prevention, early intervention, to alternatives to detention, placement and incarceration for youth aged 12 through 25. The Innovation Fund builds on successful state-wide efforts like Project RISE, which has brought over \$30 million to communities to combat gun violence through public health strategies, including credible messenger and violence interruption programs.

### HOW IT WORKS

Overall, youth crime has consistently gone down since the Raise the Age law was first implemented in 2018. Evidence from across the State clearly shows how the law has improved community safety and youth well-being. Despite this significant progress, New York State has failed to fully deliver on its promise to fund community-based services and programs that provide alternatives to incarceration and reentry programs for young people. From 2019-2023, only a third of the money appropriated for youth justice under Raise the Age has been spent.

The **Innovation Fund would be administered by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, making \$50 million available to community-based organizations** most trusted and best-equipped to serve adolescents and young adults through a grant-making program to support young people who are at-risk for or who come into contact with law enforcement. Before this, community-based organizations have accessed state funding for youth justice through county plans, meaning that the fabric of community based support is vastly different in different parts of the state, based on local politics and priorities.

### WHO IT SERVES

The Innovation Fund would be available to **community-based organizations across New York, and groups could apply for state funding directly.**

**All young people regardless of their community, including those in New York City,** would benefit from the Fund. The Fund would also **break-down current silos in funding** that create arbitrary barriers to serving youth in different court systems by supporting programs and services for youth from **age 12 through age 25.**



## HOW IS IT FUNDED

From 2019-2023, only \$372 million of the \$1.2 billion appropriated for state-wide Raise the Age youth justice work was spent. Based on a review of approved plans in the top 10 counties (outside of NYC) based on youth arrests, less than 20% of funds approved - sometimes as little as 10% - were for community based services and programs. New York City, despite representing about half of the youth justice system in the State, has never received any of these dollars.

**The Innovation Fund would take \$50 million of the annual \$250 million Raise the Age appropriation and dedicate it to directly funding community based organizations** providing services ranging from mentoring and school support, to employment and internships, to mental health, counseling and other age-appropriate programs shown to reduce contact with the criminal justice system and future court-involvement.

Counties would still be able to access Raise the Age funding through their County Plans.

## CRIME PREVENTION

The Fund would direct dollars to the many kinds of services designed for adolescents and young adults that have been shown to reduce rearrest.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that program models like credible messenger mentoring, family focused multidimensional therapy (like Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, restorative justice and wraparound programs that include education, mentoring, job placement and care coordination produce better results for young people and community safety over more punitive approaches, including jail, placement and prison.<sup>2</sup>

One such example is New York City's Arches Transformative Mentoring program that works with 16- to 24-year-olds on probation, combining credible messengers, group sessions and individualized activities to set positive goals.<sup>3</sup> Arches participants were less than half as likely as a matched comparison group to be convicted of a new felony both 12 months and 24 months after beginning probation. Investments like these are critical now because they save taxpayer dollars and reduce youth crime.

**If you have any questions or would like to get in touch, please contact:**  
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<sup>1</sup> Richard Mendel, *Effective Alternatives to Youth Incarceration*, The Sentencing Project. June 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Lynch, Nan Marie Astone, Juan Collazos, Micaela Lipman, Sino Esthappan. *Arches transformative mentoring program. An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City*. Urban Institute. 2018.