



## PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE YOUTH SAFETY CAUCUS



*Co-chaired by Senator Camera Bartolotta (R-Beaver), Senator Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia), Representative Natalie Mihalek (R-Allegheny), and Representative Mike Zabel (D-Delaware)*

The new bipartisan, bicameral Youth Safety Caucus will work to identify and implement evidence-based changes to Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system to protect the well-being of Pennsylvania's young people and produce better public safety outcomes for the community.

### Pennsylvania research and data indicate...

**Most youth are not on a path to adult crime, and over-involvement in the juvenile justice system can increase their likelihood of reoffending.**

- 60% of youth enter PA's juvenile justice system for a first-time offense; more than half are low risk.
- Providing a community-based response is the best way to get most young people back on track and support future success in the workforce.

**Pennsylvania underutilizes effective interventions like diversion, which offers kids opportunities to stay in school, seek employment, or participate in job readiness activities.**

- Research shows diversion from the juvenile justice system leads to better public safety outcomes than formal adjudication, and more than 80% of diversions in PA are successfully completed.
- Whether young people receive the opportunity for diversion often depends on where they live.

**Out-of-home placement consumes the vast majority of taxpayer spending on juvenile justice – even though community-based services for youth are generally more effective.**

- Removing a young person from home and putting them in out-of-home placement costs as much as \$192,720 per youth per year, nearly 50 times the cost of high-quality effective family therapy.
- On average, young people are kept in placement for 16 months, through six different facilities.

### The Youth Safety Caucus will prioritize...

- **Keeping families intact** by requiring the use of community-based services instead of incarceration whenever it is consistent with public safety and the needs of our youth.
- **Holding young people accountable**, while enabling them to learn from their mistakes and grow up into responsible and productive members of the community.
- **Pursuing evidence-based policies** that improve outcomes, reduce recidivism, and strengthen public safety for everyone, including:

**Expanding Diversion**  
and school-based  
diversion to keep kids  
out of the system  
whenever possible.

**Limiting Detention**  
and out-of-home  
placement to serve kids  
with the most serious  
offenses.

**Eliminating Fees**  
and fines and  
streamlining  
expungement to ensure  
effective accountability.

**Ending Direct File**  
and keeping most kids  
in the juvenile system  
rather than trying them  
as if they were adults.

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