



**CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY**
Schubert Center for Child Studies

Cuyahoga County Council
Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee to Safety Committee
2079 East 9th Street, 8th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44115

Sent electronically to Janine Carter, County Council Clerk at jdcarter@cuyahogacounty.us

July 2, 2024

Dear Chair Hon. Ronald Adrine, Vice-Chair Jennifer Blumhagen Yarham and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your service on this unprecedented advisory group to develop recommendations for improving our county's juvenile court system. Your thoughtful discussion of the role of this group and the opportunity it presents for shining a light on the challenges and opportunities for improving outcomes for the young people who come into contact with the court, as well as our community overall is encouraging. It was especially important to hear members express concern about the disproportionate number of Black and Brown boys and girls caught up in the justice system, particularly in the overuse of bindovers, as well as the importance of quality representation and effective collaborations and programs to help prevent and divert youth from deeper system involvement.

Our organization, the [Schubert Center for Child Studies](#) at Case Western Reserve University, bridges research, policy, practice and education for the well-being of children and adolescents. We have been engaged in [youth justice policy reforms](#) in Ohio and locally since 2010, forging working partnerships with our local juvenile court and other county child-serving systems, as well as the Ohio Department of Youth Services and state policy-makers, in order to improve the possibilities for success for our young people. Rather than operate in silos, we believe our youth and communities are best served when our branches of government collaborate, along with community partners, to ensure the most effective use of our public resources to support youth in crisis and to provide effective care and treatment.

We recognize that each of you bring unique expertise and experience to this subcommittee and appreciated the invitation to share any specific youth justice and system related resources that may be helpful to the groups work. Assuming you have access to all of the juvenile court and program data and annual reports, as well as the [Wren Collective Right to Counsel 2023 report](#) and recent media stories that were already noted in your meeting, I'll simply highlight a couple of other background resources that I believe will be most relevant and easily digestible to review in a short period of time.

SCHUBERT CENTER FOR CHILD STUDIES in the College of Arts and Sciences at Case Western Reserve University bridges research, practice, policy and education for the well-being of children and adolescents.

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1. [“The Impact of Adolescent Development and Brain Research on Juvenile Justice Reform”](#) (March, 2024) is a brief (4-page) overview of the juvenile justice system nationally and locally (with recent Cuyahoga County data on youth crime, detention and bindover) and research on adolescent behavior and cognitive development and how this research has shaped and continues to inform law and policy impacting youth. For more background, see the recording of [Dr. Larry Steinberg’s March 21, 2024 CWRU](#) talk on how this groundbreaking teen brain research influenced U.S. Supreme Court decisions and beyond.
2. [Cuyahoga County Juvenile Justice Center Conditions Assessment Narrative Report](#) (September 2018) provides historical context on the conditions of confinement at the juvenile detention center and offers a roadmap for making improvements that incorporate a JDAI framework. While this is a lengthy report, the findings and recommendations are organized in eight sections by topic area and the last two pages (pages 91-92) offer a succinct list of specific short-term steps to addressing the other recommendations in the report and may be a useful starting point to ascertain the court’s progress or approach to challenges.
3. Our center is part of the Greater Cleveland Youth Justice Collective. In order to amplify the recent CLE.com “Delinquent” series, we prepared [short video responses and shared resources](#) related to the series. We hope this can help to inform about some of the root causes that lead to kids ending up in the justice system, how bindover works, and how some of the court interventions and programs operate. If you’re interested, we also have two recorded webinars – one with the [reporters who created the Delinquent series](#) and another about [countering the false narratives about our justice-involved youth](#) with credible research and data.

Finally, it’s critical to note that **over two-thirds of the kids** in our juvenile justice system had a **prior history of maltreatment with our county child welfare system**, as reported in this [NIJ study that included Cuyahoga County](#). Clearly, serious trauma is a common life experience for too many of our children who end up in our juvenile court. We urge you to keep this reality in mind as you consider recommendations for improving the system and why zealous advocacy matters.

Please let me know if you have any difficulty accessing these reports and resources or have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration and please know that we are available to provide further information or assistance as you dive more deeply into your work.

Respectfully,



Gabriella Celeste, JD
Policy Director and Co-Director of the Childhood Studies Program